

Student Perceptions of the Writing Process

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Abstract

Based on the critical research paradigm and using a mix of methodologies, this study examined student perceptions of the process approach used to teach writing. A class of 19 ESL students in an academic writing class at a small university participated in the study. As collaborators in the study, they assessed their personality types using the PET Type Check (Cranton & Knoop, 1995) and their learning styles using Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory (1976). Interviews, classroom observations, and journals provided a data base for case studies and teacher reflection. Results indicated that students perceived the prewriting step of brainstorming and peer review as most useful. Student perceptions of the tasks and course and implications for theory and practice are examined.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this study, I examined the process of teaching writing to students for whom English is a second language. Recent studies indicate that using a process approach to the teaching of writing benefits students and improves the product (Bell, 1991; Cornu A. M., DeDecker, B., Rossel, P., & Vanderheiden, M., 1990; Johnson, & Roen 1989; Ling, 1986; Raimes, 1983). The intention of the study was to examine how students respond to the various stages in the writing process. It was of an exploratory nature and utilized a mixture of research methods. Using response journals, observation, interviews, the PET Type Check (Cranton & Knoop, 1995), and the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 1976), I explored how individual learners with different psychological types and learning styles perceive the variety of tasks involved in the process approach to writing.

Background of the Problem

The purpose of the process approach to writing is to encourage fluency, and the development of a piece of writing through discussion, feedback and revision. Many English as a Second Language (ESL) practitioners utilize this method in the teaching of writing. As well, many texts incorporate exercises and activities which are based on the process approach. Because of its popularity, it may sometimes be

used without sufficient consideration of individuals and their responses. Some students may indeed excel using this method while others fail to respond and improve. It is possible that such factors as personality type or learning style may be related to student perceptions and reactions to the strategies involved in the process approach to writing.

Rationale

It is important when teaching adults that individual differences are taken into consideration in planning courses and using methodologies (Barr-Stein & Draper, 1988; Brookfield, 1990; Cranton, 1992). It is hoped that this exploratory research will assist in understanding how the process approach can best be used with students at this life stage and in the academic context, as well as enrich our understanding of the differences in how personality type and preferred learning style may affect the students' responses to and quality of product produced at various steps in the process approach, such as prewriting, outlining, drafting, use of peer response groups, revising and editing. It is a benefit to ESL practitioners to understand the perceptions of students in order to better facilitate student learning.

Definition of Terms

Adult learners are learners who are independent or are socially considered to be grown up (Cranton, 1992).

Journal writing refers to "the private, self-reflective writing one does as a way of understanding oneself or one's world" (Gifford, 1993. p.12). It is a form of expressive writing often used in diaries and letters. Journals are written on a regular basis, and are often completely private.

Dialogue journals refer to journals that take the form of "written conversations between student and teacher, kept in a bound notebook or on a computer disk or file. Both partners write back and forth over a period of time" (Jones, 1991:3). The instructor responds to the ideas that are presented and does not evaluate the entries.

ESL (English as a Second Language) refers to the subject area of English as taught to students whose native languages are not English.

Learning style can be defined as the "characteristic way in which a learner operates in a learning situation" (Bonham, 1989:29).

Psychological type in this study is the theory introduced by Jung (1971) which depicts eight differing types used to describe the "particular way our individual psyches process human experience: how they perceive reality and how they evaluate what they perceive" (Pascal, 1992, p.16). Jung makes it clear that these are merely approximations and that each individual's psyche is unique.

Assumptions

Kincheloe (1991, p.363) states that "values in research affect human beings in very concrete ways. If the values are hidden then the justifications or the educational policies which are based on them are also concealed." For this reason it is important that the researcher reflect on the values and human interests on which her appraisals are based. What are some of the assumptions that I bring to this study? First, I believe in the inherent equality of all people. The instructor is not superior to the student. Second, respect for others, their person and their ability to grow and change, is essential to classroom practice. Third, teaching, is always a work "in progress" and both as a teacher and a person I learn from my students as much as they learn from me.

With these assumptions in mind, the next chapter will examine some of the literature relevant to the proposed study, beginning with some theoretical background in adult education.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review will examine the literature on the writing process and the use of the process approach to the teaching of writing to ESL learners, Jung's (1971) theory of psychological type, Kolb's (1976) descriptions of preferred learning styles, and the theoretical background of the proposed methodologies. However, consideration first will be given to the theoretical framework of the study, the field of adult education.

Adult Education and Self-directed Learning

Discussion of adult education stretches back to philosophers such as Socrates. In 1926, Lindeman wrote one of the first books published in North America in the field of adult education. In his book on Lindeman, Gessner (1956) notes the close relationship Lindeman saw between adult education and the philosophy of democracy. Lindeman viewed the students' experience as equally important to the teacher's knowledge and believed it was difficult to discern who learned the most--the teacher or the students; moreover, he thought that classroom management would reflect this reality by exhibiting a shared authority (Gessner, 1956, p.166). Dewey's (1933) emphasis on experiential learning and on reflection and lifelong learning, though focussed on the young, expressed ideas that now form the basis of many of the concepts associated with teaching adults.

The discipline of psychology also contributed to our understanding of learning. Behavioural, humanist, cognitive and developmental psychology have all aided our understanding. Knowles (1973) draws our attention to the contributions of theorists in these fields to adult education theory. He sees behavioural theory as emphasizing “the management of procedures” and viewing the teacher as “the shaper of behaviour”(p. 61). Though much of the research in behaviourism is based on work with animals and young children, seen in its best light, the teacher does not play God, but arranges conditions that are conducive to learning.

The behaviourists’ controlled environment for learning did not appeal to Rogers (1969) who defines the teacher as a “facilitator for learning” and goes on to say that there is one fact that holds true for modern people and that is that they “live in an environment that is continually changing”(p. 103). It is for this reason that the teacher is a facilitator and that, in his view, the relationship between the teacher and learner is crucial. This requires a teacher who is caring, genuine, respectful and empathetic as well as sensitive and a good listener.

Such notions do not negate the idea of reward as espoused in behavioural theory, as the empathetic teacher will work to promote success which is itself a reward. An open and caring environment with a Rogerian style teacher, based on the democratic principles of Lindeman and Dewey, set the conditions which encourage learning.

Critical theorists, especially Freire (1972), who worked with the oppressed

people of Brazil, demonstrated and wrote about a new role for adult educators as co-learners living in and understanding the culture and becoming responsible with the learners for growth and change. Through action based on reflection and dialogue, Freire's adult learners and teachers together worked to transform lives and environments. Many of Freire's views have only recently become an integral part of the adult education literature. Freire and Shor, according to Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 22) are “desperately concerned that the teacher understand student experience”. To do this they need to “read, watch TV, listen to the radio and go to popular movies in order to stay in touch with student reality.” They also encourage teachers to question the assumptions, values and demands of texts and curricula as they relate to the dominant culture and ask whether these are in conflict with the goals of the school and students. Aware of the problems and concerns of the students and critically aware of the underlying assumptions of a system, teachers are more able to assist students in the achievement of their goals. The educator in this model is an agent of change.

At about the same time Freire was working and writing in Brazil, adult education must have had a very low profile in North America because Malcolm Knowles (1973) wrote a book entitled The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species. In it he discussed the concept of lifelong learning. And certainly since then, no longer neglected, the adult learner has become a focus for educators who understand that the process of learning is a continual lifelong process.

In the 1970s, Knowles popularized the term andragogy. He distinguished the art and science of teaching adults from pedagogy, the teaching of children. Initially he saw these as opposites, but later came to see them on a learning continuum (Knowles, 1980). Knowles' model for adult learning is based on four assumptions about adults. As they mature, their self-concepts move from being dependent to being self-directed. They accumulate a pool of experience that is a valuable and increasing resource for learning. Their readiness to learn becomes oriented more and more to the developmental tasks of their social roles. Their time perspectives change so that they are oriented toward problem centredness rather than subject centredness (Knowles, 1980). Knowles' principles point to a learning situation where learners participate actively in considering what and how they can best learn, and how they will put that learning to use. Adult education, according to Knowles, views the teacher as a facilitator providing resources and support for self-directed adults who are lifelong learners.

Self-directed learning is crucial to this process of lifelong learning. Brookfield (1986, p. 58) states that autonomy is at the heart of self-directed learning and that autonomy can be defined as "the possession of an understanding and awareness of a range of alternative possibilities." Brookfield points out that when this autonomy leads adults to gain skills in order to make interventions in their personal or social spheres they are practising the principles of self-directed learning. Self-directed learning, according to Brookfield (1990), not only implies

"very close control by learners over the future course of their learning," but also seems to involve taking advantage of unexpected circumstances and making "unanticipated changes of direction" (pp. 54, 55). Learning that is self-directed takes joy in this sense of freedom to explore, perhaps in unplanned directions.

Critical Thinking

Self-directed learning may also require that a learner be committed to the independent, critical thinking that is a function characteristic of adult behaviour (Mezirow & Associates, 1990). It is critical thinking that enables an adult to question the beliefs and assumptions learned in childhood and acquired from others. Adults use this capacity for critical thought to examine the validity of principles at work in the workplace, in the community and in everyday life (Brookfield, 1990). The development of the ability to think critically is, in Brookfield's view, one of the major goals for teaching at the college level.

There are four components of critical thinking according to Brookfield: the identification of and the challenging of assumptions; the recognition of the influence of contexts on thoughts and actions; the consideration of alternatives to existing ways of thinking and living; and taking actions based on the results of the critical analysis of the assumptions (Brookfield, 1987). Bowers (1984) expresses corresponding ideas. He writes that children internalize assumptions given to them by their parents and mentors. As adults, they work to achieve a more

complete understanding of their lives by critically reflecting on the meanings, purposes, and values that they adopted as children. Adults ought not to accept passively the social realities as they have been given to them as children.

Critical thinking or reflection is one way that an adult can achieve this transformation from childlike acceptance of transmitted values to a reasoned development of one's own assumptions and beliefs. Mezirow (Mezirow & Associates, 1990) refers to critical reflection as a challenging of the truthfulness of presuppositions in previous learning. This means that one questions the expectations and meaning perspectives which, according to Mezirow, include one's theories, beliefs, and goal orientations. Such reflection is a condition of intentional learning and includes the "explications of the meaning of an experience, the reinterpretation of that meaning or the application of it in a thoughtful action" (Mezirow & Associates, 1990, p. 99). This same critical reflection is also in his view a means to problem solving and validity testing.

Dewey (1933) had discussed reflective thought as the "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends" (p. 9). However, it is important to note that in the transformative learning of which Mezirow speaks the "further conclusion" in Dewey's definition becomes action. Transformative learning changes the way we live and work, not just the way we understand things.

It is this acceptance of adults as capable of self-directed learning, as capable of critical reflection on assumptions and beliefs, as capable of transformative learning which is the theoretical framework for this study. Coupled with my own assumption that the learners are as capable as the instructor of this type of validity testing, these ideas led to the choice of the critical research paradigm as the basis of the research methodology.

Writing: The Process Approach and ESL Learners

The second area of research relevant to this study is the teaching of writing to ESL learners using the process approach. The process approach to the teaching of writing has had a prominent place in recent writing texts (Latulippe, 1992; O'Donnell & Paiva, 1993; Reid, 1990), books for classroom teachers (Hedge, 1988; Raimes, 1983; Reid, 1993; Scane, 1991), academic journals (Dale, 1994; Ling, 1986; Rothschild & Klingenberg, 1990) and conference workshops for teachers such as "Scaffolding Writing: A Process Approach" (Fox, Gray & Soucy, 1993).

Using this approach, students do not write on a given topic in a restricted time and hand compositions in for the teacher to correct, but develop a piece of writing through a series of steps, interacting with their peers and the teacher as readers and consultants. The process involves some type of prewriting activity such as brainstorming, discussion, debating, reading or outlining. Students write

their first draft, and then in small groups with their peers read one another's texts and ask for feedback on the ideas expressed. The teacher also responds to the first draft with feedback on the content and organization of ideas. A second draft is then produced, incorporating any new insights and revisions. A final stage in the process is editing for mechanical or grammatical errors. After this stage a draft is handed in for grading. The crucial supports that instructors give their students using this approach are "time to try out ideas and feedback on the content of what they write in their final drafts" (Raimes, 1983, p. 10). Classroom teachers frequently notice that students often fail to make changes based on the feedback from their instructors and peers with regard to the content of their compositions. Some of these teachers-researchers (Horowitz, 1986; Nunan, 1991) contend that a focus on product achieves better results than the focus on process.

This issue of process versus product has been a constant source of debate in the literature on the teaching of writing (Nunan, 1991). The product-oriented approach has its focus on the end result or final writing product. Unlike the process approach, it engages the learner in imitating models of correct language, and holds to the belief that a student needs to master correct usage at the sentence level before moving on to paragraph writing. Nunan calls this the bottom-up approach.

In the process approach, on the other hand, writing is viewed as a process. The emphasis is on quantity, encouraging writers to put their ideas on paper

without worrying about formal correctness. It utilizes peer conferencing and discussion of the text with others as a means of enhancing motivation, the development of ideas, and written organization.

Although much of the literature supports the process approach, and many writing texts embrace it (Bell, 1991; Berkowitz, 1982; Dale, 1994; Reid, 1991; Scane, 1991) some researchers still question it (Rodriguez, 1985, as cited in Horowitz, 1986). Horowitz suggests that the process approach places a heavy emphasis on cognitive, affective, and psycholinguistic variables but fails to "take into account the many forces outside of an individual writer's control" (p. 146).

Moreover, Horowitz (1986) claims that the emphasis in the process approach on multiple drafts may not prepare students for examination conditions and that the overuse of peer feedback may leave students with an unrealistic assessment of their own abilities. In his view, more emphasis needs to be placed on the academic tasks that students are required to do and the practising of those skills.

Nunan (1991) sees no reason why both approaches should not be integrated. Students themselves may very well hold the answers to the value of the process approach. Perhaps the task itself and the context in which the students study may require modification of the process or, for certain tasks, the use of another methodology. It could also be true that the use of a particular approach may suit certain students' learning styles and personality types.

Most of the studies in the use of the process approach have involved native English speakers. Raimes (1985) advises caution in basing “our pedagogy on observations of similarities between unskilled first language (L1) and second language (L2) writers” (p. 232). She gives two reasons for this. First, there is a lack of agreement on the criteria for the measurement of skill in writing. She also notes that while some researchers see a lack of language proficiency reducing the effectiveness of the process, others argue that in spite of the fact that language proficiency is a factor, strategies and behaviours are more important determinants in composing skill than language proficiency. Zamel (1983) an early proponent of the process approach supports the latter idea. Second, Raimes warns that we must be careful that a pedagogical shift in the teaching of writing in a first language not be allowed to set the standard for what we look for in research in English as a Second Language.

Whatever methodology we use in the teaching of writing, our students come as individuals, with particular ways of adapting to the educational setting, the teacher, and fellow students. One way of beginning to understand these individual differences is through the study of personality.

Jung's Theory of Psychological Type

In Jung's theory of psychological type, two basic psychological attitudes are identified: introversion and extraversion. These attitudes comprise the way in

which an individual adapts to the environment and those in it. At the one end of the continuum are extraverts. They focus outwards towards the objects in their environment. They are "open," "sociable," "friendly and approachable" (Jung, 1971, p. 330). They enjoy groups and have a need "to join in" (p. 549). On the other end are the introverts. They like to reflect and contemplate. They enjoy withdrawing into themselves. Their focus is inward rather than outward. Large groups and popular movements, which may influence an extraverted type lead to a tendency in introverts to draw deeper within themselves (p. 551).

As well as these two basic mechanisms of adaptation or attitudes, Jung identifies four functions: thinking and feeling which he called rational or judgmental, and sensing and intuition which he thought of as perceptive or irrational. The thinking function uses concepts to connect ideas and is used when persons consider and reflect on their experiences. Thinking types use logic and reason to guide them. Feeling is a subjective process. It imputes value to experience. Things are considered to be good or bad or indifferent, and according to Jung, the feeling type does not use the connection of ideas to impart these values. Sensing is a perceptive function. The bodily senses in a sensing type are continually processing sense perceptions. It is these sensory images that provide the mental images of their world. Intuition is an unconscious process used to perceive the inner and outer worlds indirectly. Ideas present themselves whole and complete to the intuitive mind. Frequently, there is no concept of where they

came from.

These functions combine with the attitudes into eight psychological types: extraverted thinking, introverted thinking, extraverted feeling, introverted thinking, extraverted sensing, introverted sensing, extraverted intuitive, and introverted intuitive.

Extraverted Thinking types use external, objective data and accepted norms to orient themselves in the world. They are generally logical, positive and creative in their thinking. They base their activities and behaviours on intellectual conclusions and principles that they have worked out.

Extraverted Feeling types use their feeling and values to guide their lives and decisions. This type adapts to external conditions and strives for harmony with the outer world. According to Jung (1971), the "object" is indispensable to and determines the quality of feeling (p. 354).

Introverted Thinking types enjoy developing theories and ideas. They are not interested in traditional ideas. They collect facts to maintain and support their ideas, ignoring those that may not fit. Solitude is essential for them to be able to reflect on their ideas.

Introverted Feeling types maintain values and feelings that may have no basis in any concrete reality. The feeling function is rarely exhibited outwardly. They appear outwardly to be sympathetic and content, with neither the desire to impress or to change others.

Extraverted Sensing types are life's realists. They are well adjusted, value things, people, and facts, to the extent that these things impact on their sensations. Typically they are good company, very likeable and thoughtful of others.

Extraverted Intuitive types seem to be able to see to the heart of things. Their intuition is triggered by the object and actively and creatively allows them to gain insights, see relationships and possibilities. They are visionaries who have an ability to bring their dreams to life. They can communicate them convincingly. They feel stifled by normal, stable routines and conditions.

Introverted Sensing types put their subjective dispositions and personal meanings onto the objects they perceive. Thus, they see things differently than others, and what they see may not be grounded in reality. According to Jung, they see the background of the object and not the mere surface.

Introverted Intuitives draw up from the unconscious visions and images. When focussed on an external object, they seem able to instantly see the inner reality in that external object. These perceptions seem to come in an instant from the unconscious.

Jung (1971) describes individuals as having dominant and auxiliary functions. In the descriptions above, the dominant function is the one described. For example, the extraverted intuitive type has intuition as the dominant function. These functions in any one person can be more or less dominant. In addition to the dominant function, each individual has an auxiliary function. If the dominant

function is irrational (intuition or sensation), the auxiliary function will be rational (thinking or feeling). The auxiliary function is the second most developed function of the four functions. The auxiliary function can also vary in strength or development. More detailed explanations of these concepts and descriptions of the characteristics of these types can be found not only in Jung's work (1971), but also in more recent books (Keirsey & Bates, 1984; Sharpe, 1987).

The concept of psychological type has been popularized in the use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1962). Workshops and training programs on its use are commonly used across North America in work environments, religious communities and for personal growth and self-understanding.

More recently, Cranton and Knoop (1995) have developed the PET Type Check. It has been under development for 5 years and its authors hoped it would more closely reflect Jung's theory than the MBTI. It is composed of a self-administered questionnaire using a 5-point scale. This is then interpreted through individual profiles, and finally the profiles and interpretive materials are returned to the individuals and discussed and reflected on critically.

Kolb's Learning Style Inventory

One of the most well-known models of learning style is that of Kolb (1984). According to his theory, there are four stages which form a learning cycle. The first is concrete experience. This involves experiencing something new. Then,

there is reflective observation in which one observes oneself or others having an experience. Next, there is abstract conceptualization. In this stage one creates concepts or theories which can explain one's observations. Finally, there is active experimentation in which one uses the theories to make decisions or to solve a problem. In his view, because of our particular needs, goals, and experiences we come to prefer one of these stages over the others.

He names those who use abstract conceptualization and active experimentation "convergers." A converger's preference is to come to a solution that is specific and concrete and to do so quickly. This type tends to be unemotional and likes to work with ideas or things rather than with people.

Those who use abstract conceptualization and reflective observation are "assimilators." An assimilator likes to bring ideas together and integrate them in models and theories. An assimilator is not very interested in applying the theories to real life. He/she learns best by reflecting on the information gathered through reading, listening and observing.

Those who prefer to use concrete experience and active experimentation are "accommodators." They like to learn through experience. They enjoy taking risks and work well in circumstances that require adaptation. The trial-and-error approach suits them well.

People who use concrete experience and reflective observation are "divergers." Divergers enjoy interacting with people and love generating ideas.

They are good at brainstorming. On the other hand, they take time coming to a solution because they like to work on all the possibilities and have trouble focussing on tasks.

Learning style can be assessed using Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (1976). This instrument, which has been widely used, seems to predict learning behaviour quite well (Kolb, 1984). Easily used, the instrument requires a person to rank four words within each of nine sets. Each word is related to one of the four stages mentioned previously. These ranks are added, charted on a diagram and denote the learning style of the individual. Although Kolb's theory has been criticized (Jarvis, 1987), Cranton (1992) states that reliability studies seem to indicate that it shows a strong stability.

Learning styles of individuals have been shown to be related to personality type. Kolb (1984, pp. 78-81) reports on the relationship between learning style and personality type as reflected in the Meyer-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). He found a correspondence between introversion and the experiential mode of reflective observation and between extraversion and active experimentation. As well, he notes that concrete experience and the apprehension process are related to both the feeling approach to judging and the sensing approach to perception. The intuitive approach to perceiving and the thinking approach to judging are related to abstract conceptualization and the comprehension process. Although he suggests caution in using the data from his studies because of the fact that both instruments

are based on self-report and because there is not sufficient evidence that the MBTI accurately reflects Jung's theory.

Carrell and Monroe (1993) investigated the relationship between learning styles as measured by the MBTI and performance in writing tasks produced using the process approach. One of their observations was that it was possible that the negative correlations found with one group of writers (sensing types) could have been an effect related to an incompatibility between the learning styles of these students and the method of writing instruction used. Fourquerean, Meisgeier and Swank (1990) studied the link between learning style and Jungian psychological type and found two bipolar preference dimensions: a reflective learner-active learner (introversion/extraversion) pole, and structured/motivated - unstructured/causal (judging/perception) pole. They suggest that psychological type may act as a useful guide to enrich our understanding of how student preferences interrelate and affect teaching and learning, particularly with regard to the scores on these dimensions.

To summarize, this study is mainly concerned with young adults and their perceptions of the process approach used in teaching writing. Concepts from the field of adult education, self-directed learning and critical thinking, as well as individual personality and learning style form a theoretical base for the study. They also are related to the choice of research paradigm and the methodologies used. Chapter 3, which follows, will deal with the topic of research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Methodologies

The study utilized a mix of methodologies. The PET Type Check (Cranton & Knoop, 1995) and the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 1986) are based on quantitative measurement. Interviews and response journals are frequently used in qualitative research. The involvement of the participants (students in the study) as collaborators falls into the critical research paradigm.

Quantitative Methodologies

Quantitative methodologies fit into the positivist perspective of research. This approach is frequently used in experimental research. The experimental approach, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (1990, p. 8), is the "most rigorous" of scientific methods. Using an experimental and control group, the researcher attempts to control for all extraneous variables. Measurement and interpretation of results are made as objective as possible. The researcher hopes by these means to be able to generalize the findings to related populations.

In order to determine the relationships among two or more variables, correlational research may be done. This type of research is used to better enable the researcher to make predictions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). Unlike experimental research it requires no manipulation or intervention on the

researcher's part other than administration of the instrument(s). The initial measurement involved in the PET Type Check falls into this category.

One stated benefit of this type of research is the ability to be able to eliminate as much experimenter bias as possible. A hypothesis is formulated in advance and problems can be anticipated and provided for. A good experimental design may allow for generalization to populations other than that of the sample used. Until recent years, scientific/positivist research has been the standard. However, critics argue (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 62) that a generalization is "an assertion that is context free" and that it is impossible to conceive of any situations involving human behaviour where the context does not have a strong influence in mediating events. The characteristics of qualitative methodologies surmount this problem.

Qualitative Methodologies

The characteristics of qualitative research are fivefold according to Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 27). First, it takes place in a natural setting. Second, it is rich in description. Third, it is concerned with process. Fourth, it uses inductive analysis. Finally, the researcher is concerned with meaning, and checks with informants to ensure that observations are correct. Qualitative research utilizes data collection methods such as observations using field notes, rich descriptions of the settings and participants, accounts of events, reconstruction of dialogues and

journals reflecting on the experimenters' frame of mind. The researcher then analyses the content of the data collected, sometimes quantitatively, using statistical analysis. In order to overcome possible criticisms of subjectivity and bias, many qualitative researchers attempt to validate their findings by the use of triangulation, using multiple data sources, multiple methods and multiple perspectives or investigators (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 197).

Qualitative methodologies allow for a more holistic view or picture of what goes on in a particular setting or using a particular process. Although one is less able to generalize using this method, the descriptions are rich enough that individuals reading the research may very well see applications to their own situations. In spite of their obvious differences, the qualitative and quantitative approaches "convey a similar understanding of their relationship to the research act" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 99). Both attempt to describe reality in as neutral and unbiased a way as possible.

Critical Science Methodologies

Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest a paradigm for research which they call Critical Education Science. In their view, education is a "practical, value-laden activity" (1986, p. 101). For this reason, educational researchers ought not to be content with being value-neutral but must face questions about the practical values and goals of education. They think three functions mediate the relationship

between theory and practice. The formation and extension of critical theorems is the first and these must be able to stand up to examination (be true) and their examination must be carried out with "freedom of discourse." The second function is the organization of the processes of enlightenment. Insights achieved must be "authentic" for the individuals involved. Their understanding must be achieved without any coercion. Participants must be free to raise questions, deny claims and test their own points of view as they self-reflect and discuss their reflections with others. The third function is the organization of action. The criterion for this function is that decisions must be "prudent." This requires that participants involved in the action are involved in the decision making previous to the action, and are participating freely. In the view of critical theory, the researcher is not a disinterested observer, but a participant in developments and actions taken. Carr and Kemmis (1986), along with Kincheloe (1991), argue for the use of a methodology in which people who are "knowing subjects," participants rather than subjects, reflect with the researcher on the questions involved (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Furthermore, they understand that critical educational research has significant implications for teachers/researchers themselves. It requires them to become researchers into their own practices, understandings and situations.

Research methodologies from all three paradigms make important contributions to the field of educational research. The use of a mix of

methodologies allows one to incorporate these assets into a particular piece of research. That was my hope in this research. Although three methodologies contributed to the study, the underlying paradigm is that of critical research. It fits most naturally with my underlying assumptions as teacher and researcher.

Context

The context for this study was a mid-sized university. The department in which it was undertaken offers both credit and noncredit courses in academic English for students enrolled in university classes and for whom English is a second language. As well, it has an intensive English program. In the noncredit courses at the time of the study, the focus was to assist students in the development of their academic skills. The listening/speaking courses, helped students develop skills in listening to lectures, participating in seminars, and making seminar presentations. The writing courses focussed on essay writing, library research, use of a variety of rhetorical patterns, notetaking, paraphrasing and summarizing. These classes ran for the 12-week duration of the regular university semesters for four hours a week. Two hours were computer labs, and two hours were seminars. They were required courses for students, had exams in the scheduled exam periods and were paid for by the students.

The students in these courses came from all over the world. Their main purpose was to obtain a university degree. They were studying in a variety of

fields. For the most part, they are taking first-year courses. The majority of students in these courses are visa students, although there are some who are landed immigrants.

The Course

The course chosen for this study was a noncredit writing course. Students met on Mondays for two consecutive 50-minute periods in a seminar room, and on Thursdays for two consecutive 50-minute periods in a computer lab. This course was a required writing class for English Second Language (ESL) students taking first year courses at the university. This was the first of the two courses on academic writing skills. All of the students were visa students.

This course was selected on the basis of convenience and skill level. It was necessary that the participants in the study have a reasonable level of ability in English in order to be able to participate fully in the tasks involved. This was the only academic writing class running at the time the data was collected. I was both the researcher and the instructor in the class.

The class consisted of 19 students. Their language backgrounds were as follows: 9 Chinese (6 Mandarin from Taiwan, 3 Cantonese from Hong Kong); 7 Japanese; 1 Norwegian; and 2 Spanish (1 from Venezuela, 1 from Mexico). All of the students were taking courses at the university, for the most part first-year courses. Their major fields of study included: Business, Computer Science,

Economics, Environmental Studies, Linguistics, Music, Psychology, and Sociology. Nine were female and 10 male. They had studied English from 2-13 years with an average of 6.9 years. The age range of students was from 20-31 with an average age of 21. Eleven students had previously attended writing classes using the process approach. These data are presented in Table 1.

The focus of the class was on the development of academic writing skills. The students' English was at a high intermediate to advanced level. Eleven of the 19 students had been students in the intensive English programme at the university, and were therefore familiar with the process approach to writing.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

A mix of methodologies was incorporated in order to have the most complete data possible. Quantitative data collection included the use of the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory (1976) and the PET Type Check (Cranton & Knoop, 1995). These tests were utilized to assist the students to further their own self-understanding, and so that the researcher-teacher would have a better understanding of the students' learning styles and personalities as they might relate to perceptions of the writing process.

The first of these tests, the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory (Kolb, 1984), involves ranking words with those that best characterize one's learning style

Table 1

Demographic Information

Student	Sex	Age	L1	Major	Years studying English
A	F	21	Japanese	BBA	7
B	M	26	Norwegian	Environmental Studies	7
C	M	22	Spanish	BBA	2
D	M	20	Japanese	Sociology	6
E	F	20	Japanese	Psychology	6
F	M	21	Chinese HK	Computer Science	10
G	F	20	Chinese Taiwan	Psychology	8
H	M	24	Chinese Taiwan	Economics	10
I	M	27	Chinese Taiwan	Economics	7
J	M	23	Japanese	Economics	8
K	M	22	Chinese HK	Computer Science	10
L	M	23	Chinese Taiwan	Economics	6
M	M	31	Chinese Taiwan	Computer Science	2
N	F	22	Chinese HK	BBA	13
O	F	22	Chinese Taiwan	Sociology	2
P	F	21	Japanese	Sociology	8
Q	F	22	Spanish	Music	4
R	F	25	Japanese	Sociology	8
S	F	23	Japanese	Linguistics	8

ranked as a 4, the next best as a 3, the next as a 2, and the one least characteristic of one's learning style as a 1. When the items were scored, they indicated a "relative emphasis on each of the four modes in the learning process" which are: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation as well as two combination scores that show the degree "to which a person emphasizes abstractness over concreteness" (pp. 68-69). The norms for these scores are based on those developed from a group of 1,933 subjects, both male and female, from a large variety of jobs and ranging in age from 18 to 60.

The students in this study self-administered and scored the test.

Information was given to them on each of the four modes or stages in the learning cycle as well as the types--accommodator, diverger, assimilator, and converger--that are indicated when their scores are put on a two-dimensional map.

The PET Type Check, developed by Cranton and Knoop (1995), is a procedure for assessing Jung's psychological types. It consists of three components: an empirical component with 80 items rated on a 5-point scale which are categorized into eight psychological types, an interpretive component in which individuals analyse their profiles, and a critical component in which collaboration and discussion focuses on growth and change. The PET Check has been given to over 2,000 individuals. Although there were a disproportionate number of educators in this sample, 40 individuals spoke English as a second language and another 30 came from diverse cultural backgrounds. The empirical portion of the

procedure was found to have acceptable reliability and validity. Reliability was shown using Cronbach's Alpha. The distribution of responses for each item was also found to be satisfactory. Feedback from participants appeared to indicate that the interpretive and critical components were found to be "satisfactory, dependable and trustworthy"(Cranton &Knoop, 1995:249).

In this study, the students recorded their responses to items using a five point scale that ranged from 1 (NO!) To 5 (YES!). Totals were scored and transferred to a profile (see Figure 1). Second, the students were given descriptors of the various types and asked to highlight any descriptions that they would identify as relating to them and compared these findings with their profile. They were given a leaflet with information on interpreting type to assist them as well. Finally, in class, students worked in groups discussing their results and were encouraged to write about their reflections in their journals. Students were told that I would be happy to meet with them to discuss any questions they had about their results. Working with others questioning and reflecting on one's profile is the third component of the PET Type Check. Cranton and Knoop (1995:264) note that "this component of the assessment procedure involves working with individuals to question, reinterpret, and consider how this new knowledge may change them" and can be done in a one on one setting or a group setting depending on the context.

It is important to note that the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of these

students could have had an effect on the PET test results. Students could have misunderstood some of the statements or some statements may have had a different significance or value for people from other cultures. Some of the over 2000 individuals given the test in Cranton and Knoop's (1995) study were people for whom English was a second language, but not enough to establish that it is equally effective for those with ESL backgrounds. However, these students were chosen because their level of English was quite high. Any questions about the meaning of the statements were answered to ensure that they were understood. The inclusion of the critical reinterpretation component, group discussion and individual discussion of the results should have helped to overcome cultural bias if it existed.

Qualitative methods such as case studies, observation of students and description of the participants, researcher and the context were used to provide rich background material and to ground the study in its real life situation. As much as possible, participants were involved as collaborators with the researcher-teacher, a method which draws on the critical action research paradigm. Participants were fully informed of every aspect of the research, encouraged to examine the researcher's ideas and their own critically. This research paradigm also encourages both the participants and researcher to become enlightened in the process and hopefully this will lead to positive change in terms of classroom practice.

Journal Entries

Students were encouraged to keep response journals in the form of an ongoing dialogue with the instructor / researcher. These were not evaluated or corrected but were a means of expressing ideas. Writing in a journal was also a regular task suggested in the course text both as a means of developing fluency and exploring ideas in the reading or writing assignments. Students were aware that the writing in these journals would provide material that might be used in the study. The journals were read and ideas related to student perceptions of the writing process or indicated support for the data on personality type or learning style were recorded.

Participant Observation

While the students participated in activities related to the process approach, for example, brainstorming, they were observed and an anecdotal record was kept. Participants were aware that they would be observed. Observations were made without the aid of a checklist in order not to begin by putting bounds on things to note. Each stage in the writing process was observed and logged. These logs were read and analysed for information relevant to the students' perceptions of the process and indications of personality or learning style preferences.

Product Assessment

The work that the participants produced was evaluated in order to allow triangulation of the data collected. For example, if a student described a brainstorming activity as exciting and worthwhile, yet produced very few words or ideas it could call into question the comments made in journals or interviews.

Case Studies

Data collected from this study were also analysed using a case study approach. The case studies were based on notes made on the content of the taped interviews and notes made during classroom observations. My reflections on this data were also incorporated into the case studies. When the case studies were completed, the students were invited to come in and read and discuss them with me. They were asked to comment on any material that they thought did not represent the experience for them. In some cases, I asked for clarification of data that seemed contradictory. At this time students were also asked to give the name that they wanted to have used in their case. This final meeting provided an opportunity for student input into the interpretation of the data in keeping with the critical research method.

When all the material was gathered, it was charted to facilitate comparisons among individual learners. Comparisons were made of student perceptions, learning styles and personality types as they relate to the use of the writing process

(see Tables 1 and 2). Every effort was taken to ensure the privacy of the students, so all materials were kept in a locked file, and participants were given code names to protect their identities before they chose the name they wished to be used for publication of the results.

Limitations of the Study

In a study of this type there are limitations related to the students and the teacher. First, it is possible that the students may find it difficult to be honest in their assessment of the various steps. They may respond in the way that they think the teacher / researcher wants them to. For this reason students were assured that their honesty would have no negative consequences. Second, the critical research paradigm assumes the students are co-researchers. The students may not be interested in this type of involvement.

To summarize, this chapter has dealt with issues related to methodology. The study incorporated a mix of methodologies; however, the paradigm which undergirds these choices in methodology is the critical research paradigm as it fits most closely my assumptions as a teacher and researcher. Some of these are: Students and teachers are equal partners in the educational process; classrooms should be run on democratic principles; and growth and change are a natural, constant, and essential part of living and learning. Chapter Four which follows will present the results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to examine student perceptions of the writing process, and how these perceptions varied for individuals with different learning styles and psychological types. The analysis examined the content of the participants' journal entries, the interviews and the observation notes made. Journal entries were examined for content, length and regularity. These were also reviewed to take note of any relationships between the above and the personality type or learning style of the writer. Interview data were used to identify student perceptions or comments related to the various components of the process approach and any reasons given for those perceptions. Observation notes of classroom behaviours and work submitted were used to see whether the students' perceptions were substantiated by these means. Case studies were developed for five of the students, and then all the observations were charted to look for any patterns and differences within the class as a whole (see Table 2). This chapter will deal first with the class data and then individual case studies.

Class Data

To repeat, the main purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions students have with regard to the process approach used in the teaching of writing. Students in the interviews commented on the step or steps in the writing process

Table 2

Learner Characteristics and Preferences

Student	Personality Dom Aux Inf	Learning Style	Process Preferred	Task Preferences	Journal Use
A	ES EF IN Extraverted Perceiving		Brainstorming Peer Review	Paragraph	7 entries class topics irregular
B	ES IT IN Extraverted Perceiving		Brainstorming Outline	Essays	8 entries long/class topics regular
C	ET EN IS Extraverted Judging	CE-13 RO-10 AC-23 AE-18 Converger	Brainstorming	Graph Definitions Paragraph	11 entries long/class topics regular
D		CE-16 RO-12 AC-15 AE-21 Accommodator	Rough Draft	Paragraph	8 entries varied/class topics irregular
E	ES ET IN Extraverted Perceiving	CE-16 RO-8 AC-19 AE-17 Conv/Accom	Brainstorming Peer Review	Summary	10 entries/varied personal/class topics moderately regular
F		AE-21 AC-16 RO-16 CE-9 Conv/Assim	Peer Review	Essay	8 entries/medium length/class topics moderately regular
G	IT IS EN Introverted Judging	CE-10 RO-15 AC-22 AE-11 Assimilator	Brainstorming Outline	Paragraph	8 entries/medium length/class topics moderately regular
H	ET ES F Extraverted Judging	CE-13 RO-18 AC-14 AE-18 Diverg/Accom	Brainstorming	Definition	15 entries long/class topics + regular
I	ES IT IF Introverted Extraverted Perception	CE-19 RO-12 AC-16 AE-19 Accommodator	Brainstorming Peer Review	Definition	6 entries long/varied topics irregular

(table continues)

Table 2 (cont'd)

Student	Personality Dom Aux Inf	Learning Style	Process Preferred	Task Preferences	Journal Use
J	ET ES IN Extroverted Judging	CE-13 RO-13 AC-25 AE-15 Assimilator	Outline	Essay Topic	7 entries medium/class topics irregular
K	ES EF IN Extroverted Judging	CE-15 RO-13 AC-18 AE-14 Accom/Conv	Brainstorming	Summary	5 entries short/class topics irregular
L	ET ES F Extraverted Judging	CE-18 RO-18 AC-11 AE-11 Diverger	Peer Review Outline	Definition	9 entries varied/class topics moderately regular
M	IF IN IS Extraverted Judging	CE-16 RO-11 AC-18 AE-18 Accom/Diverg	Peer Review	Journal	15 entries long/class topics very regular
N	EF ES IN Extraverted Judging	CE-15 RO-14 AC-17 AE-13 Diverger	Rough Draft Peer Review	Summary Paragraph	8 entries medium/class topics moderately regular
O	IT ES IN Extraverted Judging	CE-10 RO-12 AC-22 AE-16 Converger	Brainstorming	Summary	9 entries medium/class topics regular
P	IT ES IN Extraverted Judging	CE-16 AC-19 AL-18 RO-15 Conv/Accom	Brainstorming	Summary Paragraph	6 entries short/class topics irregular
Q	EN ET IF Extraverted Judging	CE-19 RO-14 AC-10 AE-16 Accom/Diverg	Brainstorming Outline	Paragraph	12 entries long/class topics regular
R	IN IT EF Introverted Perceiving	CE-17 RO-14 AC-15 AE-14 Diverger	Peer Review	Journal	10 entries long/class topics fairly regular
S	IT IS EF Introverted Judging	CE-21 RO-11 AC-20 AE-11 Diverg/Assim	Brainstorming	Summary	8 entries medium/class topics irregular

that they found helpful, useful or valuable and in talked a little about how they saw them as helpful. These perceptions from the interviews were noted and charted. Classroom observation notes indicated the level of interest of the students during tasks and these were also examined for evidence of positive or negative reactions by the students to particular steps in the process. The object of this section is to report any patterns in perception that related to the class as a whole. It should be noted here that the quotations from students' writing have not been altered so their voices can be heard. For this reason, irregularities in grammar or spelling are present.

Student Perceptions of the Steps in the Writing Process

The first step in the writing process is prewriting. There are many ways of gathering information in this prewriting stage, such as: brainstorming, listing, making cluster diagrams, freewriting, interviewing, reading and researching. Twelve of the 19 students commented in the interviews that they considered brainstorming, one of these prewriting activities, to be one of the most helpful and useful steps in the writing process. This was the majority of the students, and the preference appeared across the spectrum of personality types and learning styles. Three students said that it helped them to get ideas to write about. Four said that they thought it helped because they were working in their second language. Two said that it helped with vocabulary. This was the most notable finding with regard

to the perception of the class as a whole of any step in the writing process.

It is interesting that none of the students mentioned reading as helpful as a preparatory step. Readings were included in each chapter of the class text and many of the writing activities were related to the readings. None of the students mentioned freewriting as valuable even though this was a suggested activity in the text and students utilized this type of activity in their journals. It appears then that for this class, the activity most valued was brainstorming.

Making an outline is also used by many writers at the prewriting stage. In this step, which is most often used when writing longer compositions, a writer organizes the ideas or arguments in point form. Two of the students found outlining helpful. Both of them were Extraverted Thinking types. One was introverted and one extraverted. Both were Assimilators according to the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory. No Learning Style test results were available for the fifth student who expressed a preference for outlining.

After prewriting, and in the case of essays, developing an outline, students wrote their first draft or rough draft. Two students thought that the rough draft was the most important step. One student said that that was all he did when he wrote an essay. He just wrote the rough draft and did a spell check. The other student remarked that it was the step in the process that helped him think.

After writing the first rough draft, students in the writing class worked in small groups reading one another's work and discussing the organization and

content of the papers. This was done with guiding questions. Often these were contained in the text. This step of peer review was considered helpful by eight of the students. This was the second most significant finding relating to the class as a whole. Of the students that found peer review useful, all but one were extraverted.

Revising, rewriting, sometimes more peer review and editing are all steps that are commonly engaged in using the process approach and were a regular part of our classes. None of the students reported that they liked revising, rewriting or editing. In my experience as a classroom teacher, there is seldom much evidence of change resulting from peer revision. In my experience with this class and other classes, revising and rewriting are often merely writing it out more neatly to hand it in.

Students in this class perceived the brainstorming step as the most helpful step. This was most frequently seen as a way of accessing language. Peer review was second in terms of perceived value. It was valued as a way of getting ideas, developing one's own ideas, and checking whether others understood. Some said simply that they liked it because they liked working with others.

Student Perceptions of Tasks

During the interviews, students also discussed their perceptions of the tasks done during the term (paragraph writing, definitions, describing graphs, summary writing, paraphrasing, essay writing, report writing and journal writing), and they

identified those which were most valuable to them. Seven people chose paragraph writing, five summary writing, four definition writing, three essay writing, and one describing information in graphs. In the classroom observations, I noted that the class seemed to really enjoy writing definitions. Paragraph writing was valued as a way to develop skill at writing in a short period of time, a skill necessary for short questions on exams. Summary writing was found to be a difficult task, as was paraphrasing; however, many students had identified it as a skill they needed in the initial needs analysis. The graph description tasks were from an early chapter in the text and the students struggled with them. They found it difficult to make sense of the graphs and also to describe what they saw. The one student, an Extraverted Thinking Type, who identified this as a useful task, seemed to enjoy the challenge and received the highest grade for that assignment.

Student Perceptions of the Course

One task was altered as a result of classroom observations. Student perceptions of the course were noted quite frequently in the field notes. Students were open about their negative feelings that the course was required. Some of them felt that it was an unfair financial burden, others felt that there were students whose English skills were not as good as theirs who were not required to take ESL courses. As a result of these issues raised by the class, I gave them an optional topic for the business report assignment. They could write a report making

suggestions for changes to the policy for visa students. This was an assignment that gave them the choice also of working in groups or individually. All but one student chose to work in groups, and all the groups chose to write a report on ESL courses and the problems and needs of international students.

Problems raised in these reports were quite consistent across groups. One area they discussed was the difficulty in communicating. This covered a broad spectrum of problems. There was a perceived lack of communication from the university with regard to health insurance so that in one case a student had already bought expensive international coverage that was not valid here and then found out here about OHIP. It could also be the case that they received all the necessary information but misunderstood it. One report recommended that more help or information be offered to students regarding their understanding of the health insurance prior to their leaving their countries.

A second issue related to communication was more personal. One group reported it as a sense of “lack of belonging.” They said that foreign students “seldom take part in the Student Union.” The report continued saying that students did not know how to apply and where to apply to join things, and that the lack of “communication channels between the foreign students and the university lowers their sense of belonging.” They saw this as an impediment to their developing into “all rounded students” and noted that they “focus on academic achievement and ignore the social life in the university.”

Another issue which is possibly related is a perceived housing problem. According to one report, foreign students “complained that the number of residence placements is not sufficient. It is difficult for them to find accommodation.” Living in residence might also lessen the sense some had of not knowing how to become involved in school activities, and open the lines of communication for them with Canadian students.

Time was a third problem cited in most reports. One time issue was that of time conflicts between courses that they wanted to take for academic purposes and the required, noncredit ESL course. They resented the time and money they were required to spend on the ESL courses, especially as they were noncredit. Most reports recommended that ESL courses be set up so that they were credit courses, with the university offering at least .25 credit for them. Another suggestion related to making ESL study more useful was having it directly related to the area of study. The most productive suggestion was that ESL courses should be timetabled in the last few weeks of summer just before classes begin. This group suggested that the merits of this plan were:

- “ a) Students to get the English skills they need for university.
- b) Students can get to know each other.
- c) Students can get used to the university and Canadian culture before they start the university.”

In class and work sessions as they organized their material for these reports,

the participants' discussions were quite intense. There was more vigorous discussion of the problems and solutions than with the other writing topics. One group had some dissension over the final content of the report. The person who prepared the problem analysis focussed on a perceived unfairness in policy. One member of the group registered her disagreement. She had been unable to sway the group in discussion but felt quite strongly that this was not a fair assessment.

As a teacher, I found this task useful. It allowed the students to explore some of the problems they face and some possible solutions. Using topics in some of these areas for other writing assignments might be a good way to help students look at ways they can help themselves to accomplish their goals.

Journal Use

The majority of the students used their journals to expand on ideas or write about topics that had been suggested by the text or class assignments. Their entries were short and showed little indication of personal reflection. They were used for the most part as a means of freewriting to gather information about class topics. Five of the students spent more time using their journals. They exceeded 10 entries and their entries were longer. Of these, three were extraverted and two introverted.

The three extraverted students wrote only on class topics. As extraverts, they may have wanted to please the teacher or at least live up to the norms and

expectations of the course as they perceived them. These three students all completed the course with A's and at least one expressed the fact that that was his goal.

Unlike these students, the two introverted students in this group introduced topics of their own and showed signs of personal reflection in their entries. They were also the only students who indicated in the interviews that they thought the journal writing was the most interesting and useful task. One valued it as a place to "practice." The other valued it as a place to write without any concern for grammar or what others would think. She says, "When I write in the journal, I don't worry about grammar or expressions or am I ok. I'm ok." For her, writing in the journal was a way to be herself and please herself, to be free from concern about other's expectations. For both of these introverted students, journal writing was a means of personal expression and a place to focus on themselves, their ideas and feelings. This was noticeable in their choice of topics and the more personal character of their writing.

Summary of the Class Data

To summarize, a number of students noted the value of two steps in the process, brainstorming and peer review. Most of them, regardless of learning style or personality type, perceived the prewriting step of brainstorming in a positive light. Peer review was a close second in terms of being positively perceived by the

students in this class. The latter finding appeared to be related to extraversion. Tasks identified as helpful or valuable varied, with paragraph writing mentioned the most frequently. One of the tasks that developed as a result of students' expressed dissatisfaction led to a high degree of involvement in the writing of business reports and a greater understanding of the students' perceptions of the course and their suggestions for improvement. Journal writing as a task was only perceived as helpful by two students. This finding seemed to be related to introversion. These findings will be examined in more detail in the case studies that follow and in the discussion in Chapter 5.

Case Studies

In order to better understand the student perceptions of the writing process, individual case studies were developed for five of the students. The goal in selection of individuals for the case studies was to have a subgroup with different personality types, learning styles and genders. Once more the tapes of the interviews were used, as well as classroom observation notes and student journals. PET Type Check results and results of the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory were also examined in relation to the individual's perceptions of the writing process and tasks. The case studies vary in length. This is certainly due in some part to the amount of material available. However, it was easier to write some of these cases. For some cases, ideas and connections seemed to flow freely and for others they

did not. This was particularly obvious when writing up one case. That student was totally opposite in personality type to me. One other possible explanation then, for variations in the length of the case studies is that it is more difficult to understand and write about students whose personality is very different from one's own.

When the case studies were completed, students were invited to read them and asked if there was anything they disagreed with or whether they had any questions about the content. They were also asked what name they would like to have used in the study. Most, but not all, chose pseudonyms. Writing up these case studies was one of the most valuable tasks in this research for me.

Hsieh-Ti

Hsieh-Ti is a 31-year-old student from Taiwan. His first language is Mandarin, and he has been studying English for about 4 years. His major at university is Computer Science. As well as the English language course, he was taking three university courses at the time of the study. In the classroom observations, I noted that he worked hard during the class time to complete tasks and he participated in discussions. He was rarely absent and when he was, he made a point of coming to tell me before, if possible, and to check what he might need to do. It was noted frequently in my observations that he helped others, especially with computer problems, as he was familiar with the programs and the

lab. When handing in an assignment, he often used artistic title pages or watermarks to embellish his work. He always arrived with and sat with the same students in both the seminars and labs. They had been classmates for some time and formed a small support group to pass on information. When not assigned partners for peer review, he worked with one of these two people most frequently. On the other hand, he was always happy to work with others and freely offered to help anyone who seemed to have difficulty with the computers.

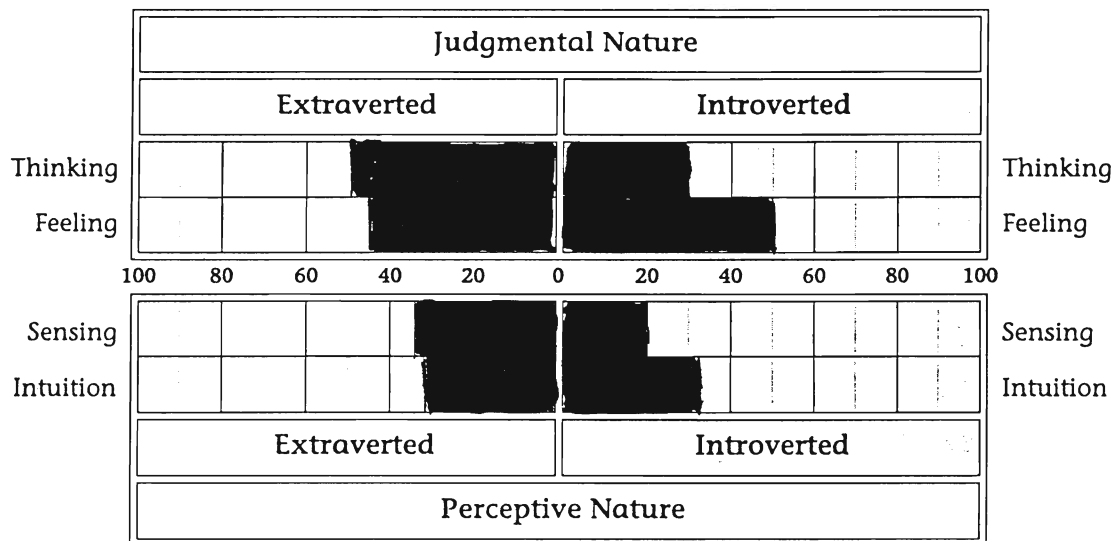
On the personality test, Hsieh-Ti's dominant function was Introverted Feeling (see Figure 1). PET material (Cranton & Knoop, 1994) indicates that IF's "prefer a calm, harmonious classroom and will be eager to help and please" (p.5). This certainly was true of Hsieh-Ti. He frequently offered help to others and was the type of student that worked to please the teacher. Interestingly, Hsieh-Ti's profile showed slightly more weight overall on the extraversion side and this may be why his introversion, which was quite strong, was not noticeable in class. He worked well with others, appeared to enjoy group work, and often volunteered answers to questions. Of course, introversion does not exhibit itself. An introvert would tend to utilize extraversion in situations like school and work, finding refreshment in his or her time alone. It is possible that he was more introverted than extraverted by nature and that he has developed his extraverted side as an adaptive skill. In order to survive in an educational context, a person who is by nature introverted would have to use and develop his extraversion in order to



TYPE PROFILE

for

Hsieh-Ti



Fill in your functions in different colours:

Function: IF dominant IN auxiliary ET tertiary IS least preferred

Figure 1. Hsieh-Ti: PET Type Profile

succeed. This would be doubly true for the person who moves to a new country to study in a foreign language. Reliance on others for information and support would force foreign students to extend their propensity for extroversion. Experience, then, could have pushed Hsieh-Ti to develop a focus on the outside world so that there was a balance between introversion and extraversion on his profile.

Hsieh-Ti's balance between introversion and extraversion was apparent in his attitude towards the writing process and assignments. On the one hand, he noted in the interview a preference for the peer review part of the writing process which involves interaction with others, and says in a journal entry, "always sharing your ideas is a nice experience." On the other hand, in his writing he notes, "It is an important point in my study that I have to know how to do something for myself," and "I prefer to write than to speak". Moreover, in the interview he said that he liked journal writing best and thought it was good practice. This was demonstrated by the fact that his journal entries tended to be longer and more regular than those of most of the students and the topics he chose to write about showed more variety. His journal entries were neat and veered into personal areas and feelings rather than only material that was related to class topics. In the journal he discussed his feelings about the topics, for example, "Today I feel sad because I thought about my computer assignment" and "I'm beginning to be scared of winter." Journalling was not a classroom exercise and Hsieh-Ti may have seen it as an opportunity to enjoy communicating with himself as well as practising his

writing skills. Here he could practice at his own speed, at his own time and choose his own topics. Writing in his journal may have been one way that his introversion expressed itself. The above examples from his journal also demonstrate his Feeling function.

On the Learning Style Profile, Hsieh-Ti's longest line was Concrete Experience. The literature indicates that people with this profile prefer learning from experience, from feeling, and relating to people, and that they have a sensitivity to feelings and people (Kolb, 1976). This certainly was true of Hsieh-Ti. He showed a capacity to care about the feelings of others when they were frustrated with the computers. He demonstrated his care about the instructor's feelings by letting me know about his absences (not a common practice among university students). This could also be a result of cultural factors; however, there were many other students from his culture who did not do this. As an Accommodator type, a learner enjoys looking at things from many perspectives. Hsieh-Ti demonstrates this in some of his journal entries. For instance, in one entry, he discusses his difficulty with an assignment, moves to seeing it as good practice, wonders if this field is for him, looks at the pros and cons and then sees the computer as a "necessary tool" and says he still needs "to spend time to take it (the course)." One of the strengths of an Accommodator is leadership. Hsieh-Ti became the leader and expert in the class with regard to computers. When in a group with other students he was the leader, seeing that the questions were

discussed and checking that reporters were assigned. However, in the group with his close friends he generally acceded the leadership role to Hsin-Yuan.

In terms of the writing process, Hsieh-Ti showed more positive affect during group work than in organizing and writing his rough drafts. This was the case although he says that he “would rather write than speak” when writing in his journal. Although his dominant function is Introverted Feeling, his Extraverted Feeling and Extraverted Thinking are very strong too. Extraverted Feeling is exhibited in good communication skills, and concern for others and these were qualities Hsieh-Ti was able to utilize in his group interactions while discussing his ideas in the group. In the interview he said “I like to have time to think alone about it,” speaking of his writing. Working in class time he may feel pressured and distracted when writing tasks are involved. Although in the interview he said he liked the journal “best,” he also indicated that peer review was very helpful. During these group sessions he valued the feedback he got from others and was one of the few students who made some changes based on peer feedback. Being a Feeling type, he may need longer to gather ideas about a topic and have more difficulty making a final decision about what he wants to say and how he wants to say it. Others may be of real assistance in this task when he needs to complete a work within a time frame.

Reflections. Hsieh-Ti raised many questions for me as a teacher. His major problem in written communication was his problem with grammar. It was a constant concern for him. In most classes there are one or two students whose grammar frequently impedes their ability to write clearly. At the editing stage Hsieh-Ti had difficulty in correcting errors pointed out for him. His organization and content were usually quite good but the level of grammar mistakes was so high that it lowered his grade substantially. Frequency of grammatical errors often irritates readers. I experienced a sense of frustration at not being able to help him improve in this regard. Most of the students did not want to work on their grammar. They were more interested in developing skills at writing quickly and organizing ideas for essays and exam questions. Little class time was given over to grammar lessons, and Hsieh-Ti did not seem to have the time to come for extra help. Extra help may not have been fruitful because he had had regular grammar classes in the IELP and after 4 years in Canada it is likely that these grammar errors have fossilized. Fossilization is “the relatively permanent incorporation of incorrect linguistic forms into a person’s second language competence” (Brown, 1987, p. 186). All the students knew that they were welcome to come for extra help any time. Hsieh-Ti did not avail himself of that opportunity although he did on three occasions express a need to work on his grammar. It is possible that even though he was frustrated by it he really was not interested in writing, used it very little in the computer courses he was taking, and therefore, lacked motivation

sufficient to push him to change. Often learners who do fossilize do so because they communicate successfully using the language in an adopted manner.

As a teacher I sometimes take responsibility for my students' lack of achievement. I recognize their effort when they show progress and need to accept their failure to progress as their responsibility too. The questions then are: How can I integrate the special needs of individual students into the program? Are there any techniques that work well to help students with fossilized grammar errors improve? What is my responsibility and what are the students' responsibilities with regard to progress in learning?

Alice

Alice is a 25-year-old Japanese sociology major. Like Hsieh-Ti, and many of the students, she has studied English for about 2 years in Canada in the Intensive English Program and is now studying in the regular university program. She is taking two regular courses and the ESLX writing course. Unlike Hsieh-Ti and many of the others, her course of studies demands more constant use of language and requires her to write essays in English. She has written quite regularly in her native language for fan magazines. In the interview, she said, "I love writing so whatever it's OK." This was in response to a question about what tasks she enjoyed the most. In the classroom observations, I noted that she worked well in the seminars in groups, and was interested in the other students and their

ideas. In the lab class she frequently followed her own way, working on her essay rather than the assigned task, and left early or arrived late. Unlike Hsieh-Ti, she felt no need to explain herself. This was not out of any disrespect, but out of a sense of equally respecting herself. Alice has a strong sense of fairness and equality. In her journal she says, “But what I don’t like (and don’t want to accept) is the thought that ‘stronger is better’ or ‘winning, that’s all’.” As her teacher, I found her attitude and her ideas refreshing and thoughtful. One had the sense that one was a supportive resource person in the model of Carl Rogers. She visited my office to get feedback on her essay, and would pop in to say hello if she was walking by. She seemed genuinely interested in the teacher as a person not just as a teacher. In the interview, she took the questions seriously and her answers were very thoughtful and moved on from the area under discussion to explore her own perceptions on writing.

Alice’s personality profile (see Figure 2) showed her dominant function as Introverted Intuition. It was interesting to watch her face when the profiles and descriptors were returned because she seemed delighted and surprised at how well some of the terms described her. Her introversion was often noticeable in her journal comments. In one entry she says, “No books, no telephone, no TV, no movies.....Just I want to spend a completely calm day with Sparky (a cat).” In another place she remarks, “I just want to be back by myself which I feel the most comfortable.” In order to regenerate herself she needs to be alone. This tends to

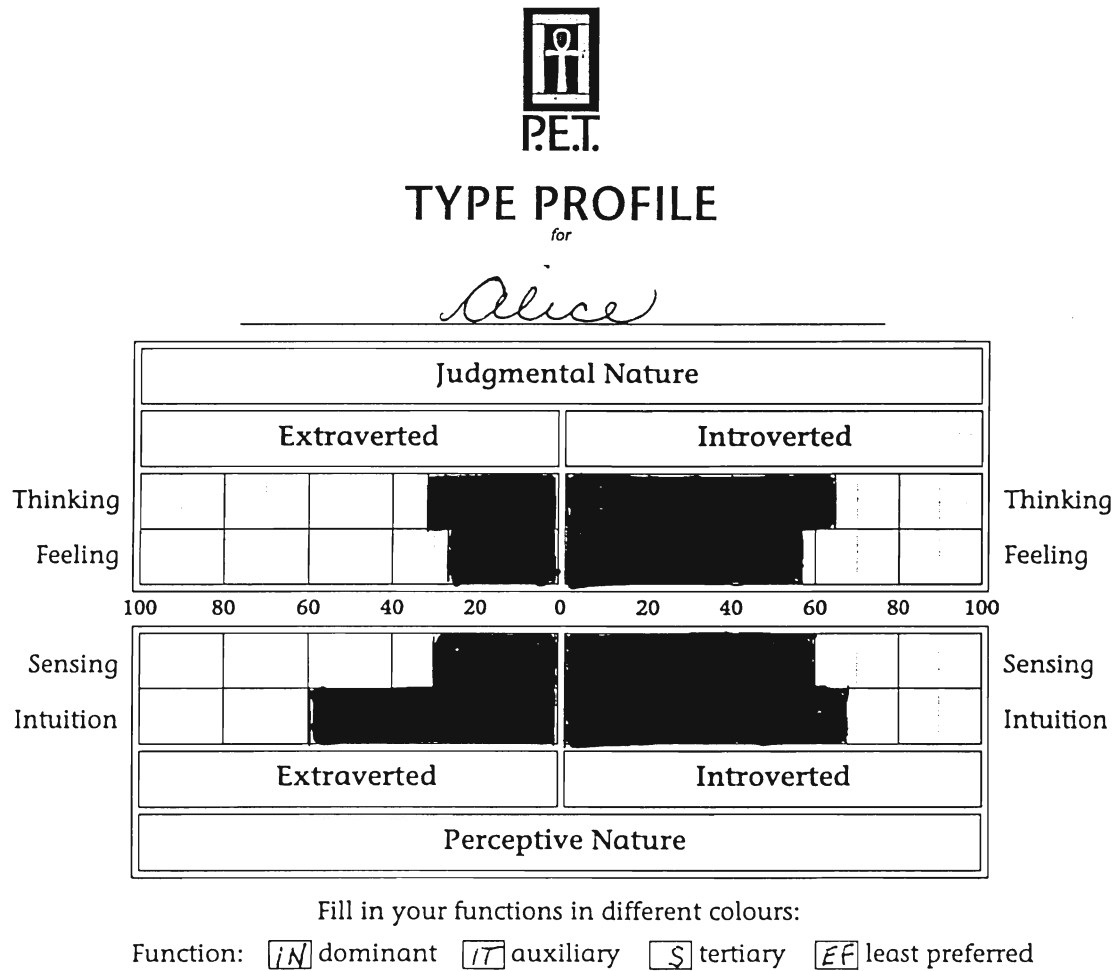


Figure 2. Alice: PET Type Profile

be true of introverts. In the interview, she noted that the journal was her favourite task. This was a task that enabled her to work in her own space, on her own topics and without concern for others' expectations.

When asked if she felt that her personality was related to her writing or her class work, she gave an emphatic "yes." She thought it was related to the fact that she did not like group work and the fact that she "wants to do what she wants." In discussing group work, she said that she was concerned about a tendency to be either dominant or subordinate. She wanted to be equal and have others be equal. She said, "I think I'm quite cooperative. Sometimes it's very difficult. Sometimes I dominate others or subordinate." She continued, "I'm afraid of being dominated or even subordinate. Just I want to be equal, as equal as others." Her negative feelings about group work exhibited themselves also in her expressed preference for the lab assignments over the seminars. Most of the lab work was done on an individual basis. For one of the tasks, a business report, she did not participate fully. This was a group project and so her reaction was not surprising. As she said in the interview, "I don't like to share responsibility." She commented further, "I want to do everything or nothing."

In spite of these reservations about group work, Alice noted that talking to her peers was one of the most useful steps in the writing process for her. She said of talking to her friends, "I can think of my ideas deeper and I can get other ideas from my friends. It could be better than mine." Peer feedback sessions were an

opportunity to explore her own ideas and those of others. They also provided a venue to check out whether people understood what she was trying to say. “When I write in Japanese I know Japanese understand.” She went on to say that in her academic courses it was important for her to discuss the ideas with friends before she wrote. It was not the language which concerned her most but the ability to understand and express ideas and cultural differences.

Alice’s dominant learning style was that of a Diverger. According to the literature (Kolb, 1984), Divergers are best at concrete experience and reflective observation and their greatest strength lies in imaginative ability. They also are able to view situations from many perspectives. They are adept at brainstorming and generating ideas. Alice is gifted with great imaginative ability. In her writing she often explored an idea from many perspectives. She showed great sensitivity in her journals to issues of justice and equality. Although she did not say that brainstorming was something she found helpful or particularly enjoyed, it certainly was something she did well when given it as a task. Frequently in a 10-minute period she would have 30 or more words or ideas. During the interview she revealed that, in writing on her own, she rarely brainstormed on paper. For someone who is good at this process, writing it down as we do in class may seem totally unnecessary.

When the students were brainstorming metaphors for writing she had the greatest number in the class. Many of them were very interesting ideas, such as

“Writing is.....therapy, drugs, observation, analysis, escape.....” Perhaps because she found it easy she did not see its value. Continuing the brainstorming process with one idea in the metaphor list, Alice explored the analogy of writing as a drug. She listed it as a “release,” and as “dangerous but attractive.” For an introvert, writing, especially in a journal, can be a safe way of expressing oneself, of releasing personal ideas and reflections, but if others are going to read the thoughts it is a dangerous and risky business. One does not know how others will receive it. As she says in one journal entry, “Even if we speak the same language we always misunderstand each other.”

A possible problem for people who are strong Diverger types is being paralysed by alternatives and being unable to make decisions. Intuitive types also have this difficulty. Alice, discussing the peer review process in the interview said that “Getting feedback from my friends, I can think of my ideas and construct them more clearly.” She indicated that she makes few changes to her draft based on this input, but she uses the process to “make it clearer” and “check it out.” As a person who likes to write and is very expressive, perhaps Alice has many ideas and alternative ways of expressing them. Peer review or teacher feedback may allow her to consolidate her ideas and clarify her choices.

Reflections. What has teaching Alice taught me? First, she showed me how important the choice of a topic for a writing activity can be. In her journal

and assignments there was much more expressiveness and fluency when she was talking about something that excited her. Secondly, in expressing her ideas of fear of subordination and domination in groups, of a longing to be equal, she drove home the importance for teachers as leaders in the larger group to work towards true equality of persons in a class. That means me, as the teacher, being neither dominant or subordinant. Although I have always tried to treat students as equals, there are so many things that get in the way of true equality. Treating students as equals would necessitate including them in all the decisions to be made: marking schemes, texts and materials used, evaluation criteria, evaluation itself. Many of those decisions have to be made before the class has been able to meet. Finally, Alice's presence in the class was for me a call to becoming more reflective. I valued her ability to take time out to think about things. Her interview was very insightful. When asked a question, she took it seriously and thought her answers through. How important that was for me. How important that is for my students. We can give no greater gift to our students than to listen to them carefully. To respond, having focussed on the question or comment they made, means that our response has a better chance of being useful, meaningful and appropriate. I thought I listened to my students but now I am not sure that I listen well enough.

Hsin-Yuan

Hsin-Yuan is a 24-year-old student from Taiwan. At the time of the study he was taking five courses towards his Bachelor's Degree in Economics as well as the ESL course. He had been studying in Canada for 2 years, first in the Intensive English courses and then at the university. In his university classes he maintained a high enough average to be on the Dean's Honour List in a very competitive program. The courses that he was taking at the time of the study did not require a great deal of writing. In the classroom observations, I noted that he participated fully in all the activities. He worked well and frequently facilitated groups in accomplishing the tasks. He had a conflict for 1 hour of the seminar class each week, but was careful to get information about any tasks or assignments that he was going to miss and he handed them in the next day. He was always a happy and pleasant student. He appeared to care genuinely about people. Twice in labs I noted he spent time helping another student who was having trouble expressing his ideas. In his journal he described an experience watching a television program. He says, "Many children in Africa are now suffering hunger and thirsty.....I really want to do something to help them by saving a small amount of money for them." Any time that he came to the office for extra help, he made a point of saying how much he appreciated it.

Hsin-Yuan's personality profile (see Figure 3) indicates that his dominant function is Extraverted Thinking. Although he has a fairly strong introverted

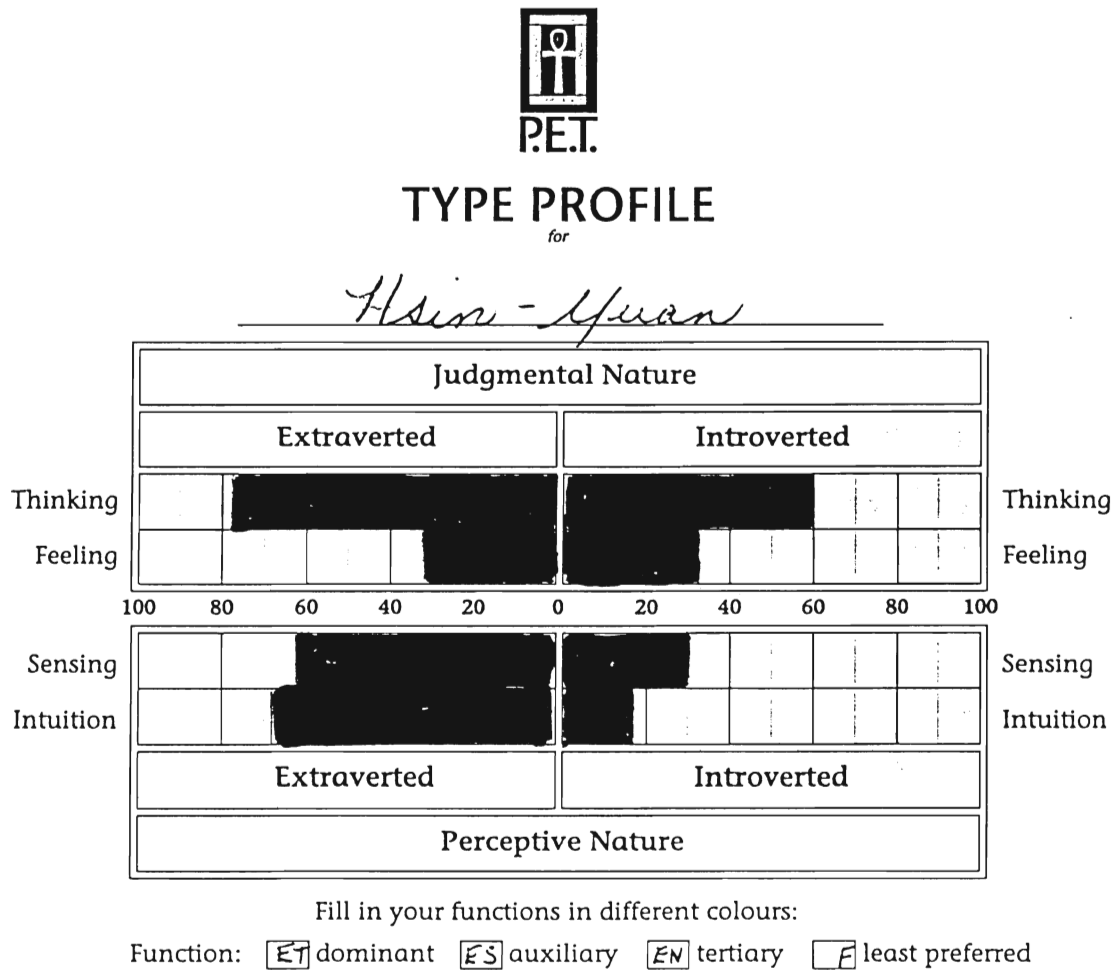


Figure 3. Hsin-Yuan: PET Type Profile

thinking function, his profile, as a whole, is very strongly extraverted. The above observations fit with his extraverted nature, as does the comment in his journal about being an ideal mate: “My role would be doing whatever we agree with. Therefore everyone will be happy living with each other.” The PET literature notes that Extraverted Thinking types take in information from the world, reflect on it using “external data” (Cranton & Knoop, 1994b, p. 6). They have clear moral principles, and justice and truth are important to them. His comment above notes the necessity of living up to one’s obligations and agreements. The excerpt from the journal describing the TV show about Africa fits the description of a person with clear moral principles and for whom justice is important, as does his suggestion that he should live up to his agreement with a mate. His consistent behaviour in living up to the course expectations (not once in this class or in the two other semesters that I had him as a student did he fail to hand in an assignment on time or before its due date) was another way he demonstrated this quality.

ETs like a world that is logical and has order in it. Hsin-Yuan demonstrates this in many ways. Describing how he copes with exam stress, he says,

I usually start to prepare my exams a week in advance before my exams. I starts from reading notes from lectures then do some practice like going over the past papers. If I still have time left I will start reading the textbook. Actually I don’t really feel stress before my exams.

If his work in this class is any indication, he goes at his tasks in a straightforward

manner, plans ahead so that things are kept up all along the way. In this way, he has no need to feel stressed with the exams because he is well prepared. He was one of the few students that worked well ahead of time on his research paper and actually handed it in early because he had assignments in other courses that required attention.

The descriptors for this type note that their thinking is “positive, productive, progressive and creative” (Cranton, P. & Lnoop, R., 1994b, p. 4). In one journal entry Hsin-Yuan describes his most stressful experience, his first day in English class in Canada. He says,

I told myself that I had to get use [sic] to it. I would be fine if I worked hard. When I came back home I reviewed all the happenings during the day. Actually, it wasn't too bad for me I started to feel confidence [sic]and brave. This was the power for me to face future challenges.

His attitude here exudes these qualities. When asked questions in the interview, Hsin-Yuan showed no hesitation in answering questions about the course. His opinions were at the ready. Asked whether he had to write much in his university courses, he said that he did not. When he was asked what he would do if he had an essay assignment, he replied that he would use the process approach and proceeded to describe those steps their commonly taught order. It seemed as if he had formed a strong opinion about the usefulness of the process.

This kind of firm opinion is in keeping with the type description of ETs. It is also interesting to note that his opinion was adopted from what his teachers, those in authority, had taught him was a good way to tackle the task, not just here in Canada but also in Taiwan. According to Jung's Psychological Types (Cranton & Knoop, 1994b), ETs "orient themselves by external facts and objective data transmitted by sense perception and by generally accepted ideas." Hsin-Yuan has experienced the process approach as a generally accepted idea across cultures and this could be one explanation for his orientation to the approach. Another explanation could be that authority and the accepted wisdom of elders and teachers has been adopted as a cultural norm and he fully accepts what he has been taught by us.

In the interview he also commented on the relationship of personality to his class work and experience. He thought that personality was related but was "not sure how." However, he noted that he had pushed and organized his group working on the business report because he did not like things to be left to the "last minute." He admitted to being autocratic and leading his group so they did things his way. The PET literature on Leadership and Type (Knoop & Cranton, 1994) notes that as leaders ETs are "task-oriented, directive and decisive" (p. 2). His comments support the idea.

Hsin-Yuan's learning style was that of a Diverger. The strengths of Divergers lie in their brainstorming, imaginative ability, ability to recognize

problems, and their understanding of people. Hsin-Yuan noted in the interview that brainstorming was his favourite part of the writing process. He states, “Brainstorming is the most important because it offers ideas before I start to write.” I noted that his brainstorming was consistently good. He frequently used diagrams in his brainstorming and noted logical connections between ideas. In the class when we worked on metaphors, Hsin-Yuan chose brainstorming as his topic. He likened brainstorming to: a way of thinking, a game, a treasury box, and an avalanche. He chose the metaphor of “treasury box” to expand on. A treasury box was “valuable, expensive, variable, impressive, buried, savings for the future, and shining.” He concluded that brainstorming

is a treasury box that people can put things in and take things out whenever they need it. To be more specific, our brain is like the treasury box and brainstorming is just like things we can put in and take out from the treasury box.

Perhaps it is not surprising that a Thinking type should consider his brain as a treasury box and value brainstorming as a discovery of buried treasure. Certainly, in his case it is an impressive treasure in the box. He has come to a foreign country and is studying in his second language. He has managed not only to survive but to maintain an A average in all his subjects, be on the Dean’s list and this year has been allowed to carry a course load of six courses. Not many native speakers could even come close to these achievements. He made sense out

of what was initially a frightening experience when he says,

I was afraid people would not understand me. Now I learn to be brave to talk to people to ask questions and even to talk [sic] jokes. I think I have overcome my fears..... This learning experience teaches me to be willing to take challenges to know what is good for me and to be brave to face problems.

He seems to have an ability to identify problems, face them, develop a plan of attack and move ahead. In the midst of that, he does not lose sight of others. He appreciates the support of his teachers and friends in carrying out his plans and goals and expresses it.

Reflections. Teaching Hsin-Yuan has been a “grace-full” experience. It is a gift when a student knows what he wants. To teach a student who works hard to absorb whatever learning is available and practices it and improves is a teacher’s dream. What questions did teaching Hsin-Yuan raise for me? How can I help my students to begin to set their own goals and then lay out a plan for their achievement? Students like Hsin-Yuan seem to do this instinctively. Others need help in identifying their goals and identifying landmarks on the way so that they can have a sense of accomplishment.

Celeste

Celeste is a Spanish-speaking student from Venezuela. She is 22, and she has been in Canada for 3 years studying, first in the Intensive English Program and now in the regular undergraduate program at the university. She is an Music major and is a very talented pianist. In the classroom observations, I noted that she participated fully in all the activities. She was motivated and interested in all the tasks. She was frequently one of the first to organize a group or to complete a task. Her attendance was regular and she was always on time. This was a complete shift in attitude from an early level of the intensive English Program when she was frequently late and careless in her work. At that time it was obvious that she was bright and capable but she found more exciting learning opportunities outside the classroom situation. This could be a result of the fact that she can now see the purpose of her English studies. She has a goal, to obtain her Music degree.

Celeste's dominant function on the PET test (see Figure 4) is Extraverted Intuitive and her auxiliary function is Extraverted Thinking. Cranton and Knoop (1994b, p. 11) note that "stable, normal and routine conditions suffocate" ENs. Perhaps the ILP classes were just that for her. The real world of new and interesting people and experiences fired her at that time. Now that life in Canada is routine for her, the thrill is found in giving herself over to her music and the challenge of obtaining her degree.

Her learning profile indicates that she has almost equal preferences for the

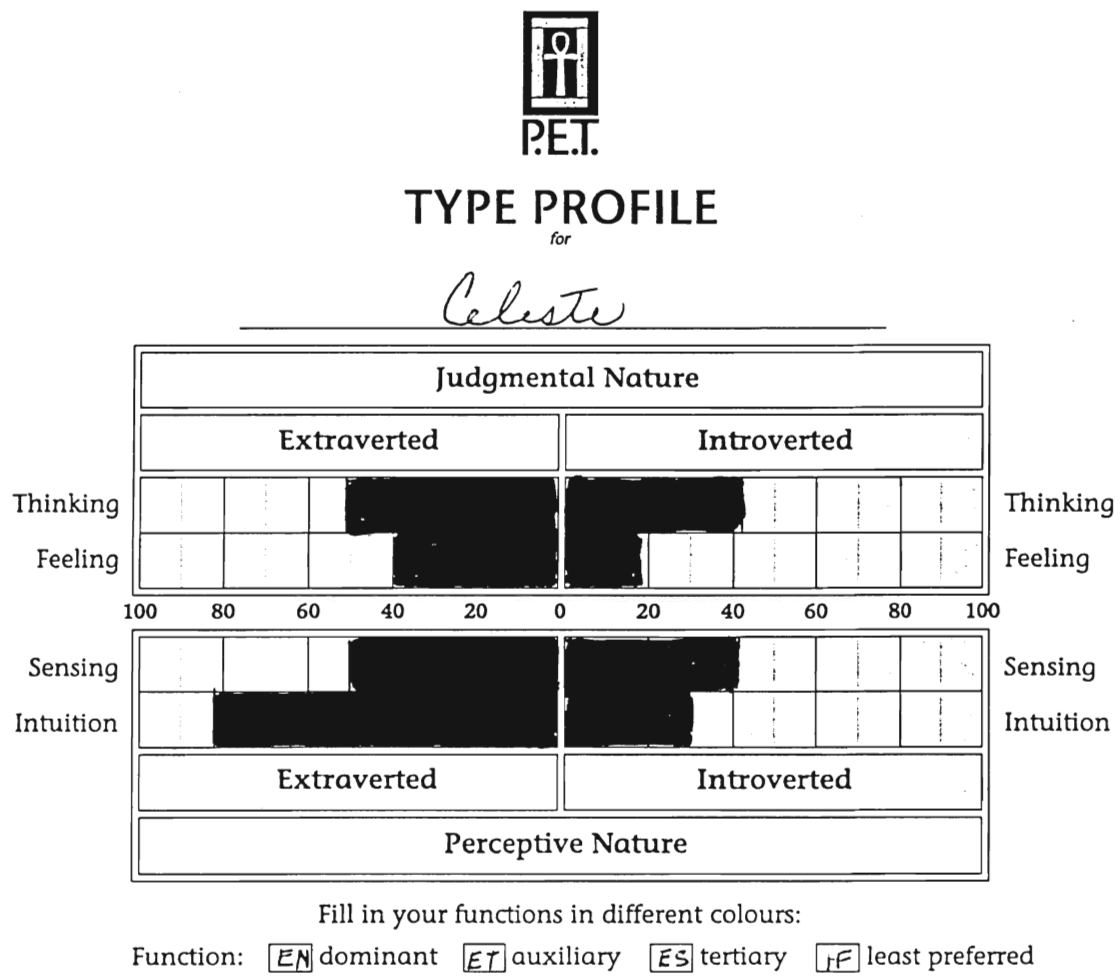


Figure 4. Celeste: PET Type Profile

Accommodator and Diverger styles with almost no preference for the Converger and Assimilator styles. In the interview, Celeste noted that in her native language she did not use the process approach but just sat down and wrote. She said that brainstorming was very useful to her because it was a chance “to express all ideas.” Unlike other students, she did not see it as an advantage in developing vocabulary. She noted that as a Spanish speaker, vocabulary was not a problem for her. Rather, the brainstorming was a way to explore ideas and then outlining helped her to organize them so that she could just “sit down and write.” This is not unexpected in an EN/ET combination.

She viewed peer review in a very positive light too saying that it was “useful to get feedback on ideas.” and “I prefer to work by myself but like feedback.” In another entry she says,

The task I liked the most this morning was talking with the partners. I think that when you write for a long time, your brain does not think very well and sometimes you do not see the mistakes you have done wrong or you can improve.

She also enjoyed working on the business report with a small group even though, as she said, she “didn’t know much about it”.

Feedback was very important to her, not just from her peer groups but also from the teacher. In one journal entry she notes, “The main purpose of doing this is that we get feedback on how we are doing the exercises and on what we have to

work on.” She goes on to say that she wants me to check everything for her, even “the freewriting in the journal.” Kolb (1984, p. 77) notes that Divergers as learners “need personal attention and feedback”. In my classroom observations, I found frequently in the lab sessions that Celeste asked for attention. Generally, it was to get comments on something she had written and only once for help in repairing a computer problem.

Of the tasks that we did this term, Celeste thought that the paragraph level work was the most valuable. She thought it offered an opportunity to practice writing quickly on a topic which was useful practise for exams.

When we explored metaphors for writing, Celeste likened it to “art, expression, life, horror, explanation, answer.” Then she expanded on the idea of writing as “art” and compared it to “practice, passion, feelings, logic, ideas, beauty and human.” Practising writing, like practising music, was a way of developing an ability so that she could express her feelings and passion. Music is her passion and her writing was at its most fluent when it was about music. In one journal entry, she relates the Japanese business concept of “Wa” to the relationship between a music student and her teacher. She says that there must be a mutual relationship because music is “expression” and “inspiration.” Therefore, “Music teachers must be aware of the students’ problems and help him.” The student has responsibility to “practice and study,” according to Celeste, “but the teacher is a friend and team member able to help him whenever is necessary. There is a

mutual contract between them.” She goes on to say that both partners will get experience and skills to work better “making that marvellous (expression) art called music.” In her view their common goal “must be shown in the results and progress of a sensitive student.” She understands that this close relationship will require “sacrifice and teamwork to get the goal.”

Reflections. Reading this one journal entry and taking time to reflect on it was very disturbing for me as a teacher. How rarely in the required writing classes do these kinds of relationships and common goals shared by teacher and student develop. Certainly, it is worth the sacrifice, but seldom does it happen. It has happened in my practice on two or three occasions in the last 4 years, but so rarely that it is an incredible gift. What blocks do I put in the way of these kinds of partnerships? What changes in my teaching practice would encourage them? I recognize the wisdom of Celeste’s comment in the same entry: “If there is no interest in one of the two sides there will be no reason to create a close relation between the teacher and pupil.” It is difficult to engender this mutuality for many reasons. In the best of circumstances we do not always connect with learners. This type of relationship is less likely to develop in classes where students often resent being required to take the course. The money and the time they see as more usefully spent on courses that are for credit and are clearly related to their goal of becoming qualified for a particular job field. Although Celeste worked well in the

class, it seemed to me that in general her motivation was fuelled by her desire to achieve her goals in music, to be able to write better essays for her courses and to have better grades.

Working with Celeste reminded me of some important truths. Sometimes a student who lacks motivation in the academic sphere may be engrossed in learning in another area, either personal or social. This could be particularly true of first-year university students and of ESL students. Teachers who work with young children are very aware of levels of readiness to learn. Perhaps with ESL students we need to be cognizant of the stages of adaptation to the new culture and watch for needs in this regard. In the second interview after reading this case study, Celeste noted that her main reason for lack of motivation when she was in IELP was that her parents had sent her here to learn English. She had not chosen to come. However, she had chosen to stay and complete a degree in music. How important it is not to slot students into categories because people change. Celeste's story reminds me of that and the importance of talking to students so we can understand where they are coming from. Finally, she illustrates the fact that motivation is a key factor in student achievement. As a teacher, I can help to motivate students to learn but the greatest motivation comes from within the student herself.

Chang

Chang is a 27-year-old student from Taiwan. He has studied English for about 6 years and has been in Canada studying for 3 years. He is an Economics major. A conflict with one of his courses caused him to miss 1 hour of writing class a week. Most of the time he worked to keep up with the assignments. In class he worked well with his classmates, many of whom he had studied with as an IELP student.

Chang's personality profile (see Figure 5) indicated that his dominant function is Extraverted Sensing, his auxiliary function, Introverted Thinking. According to Cranton & Knoop (1994b), ESs are "well adjusted to reality," "drawn to things that are concrete" and "their sense for objective facts is extraordinarily developed." His learning style is Accommodator, which appears to tie in well with his personality type. According to Kolb (1984), learners with this style emphasize "concrete experience and active experimentation" (p. 10). As learners they need multisensory presentations to hold their attention and may get uneasy if "no outlet is provided for action" (p. 10). Creative and with wide interests they tend to dislike routine and authority.

Both in and out of class, Chang always had a friendly attitude toward his classmates and me as teacher. He always made a point of talking about any

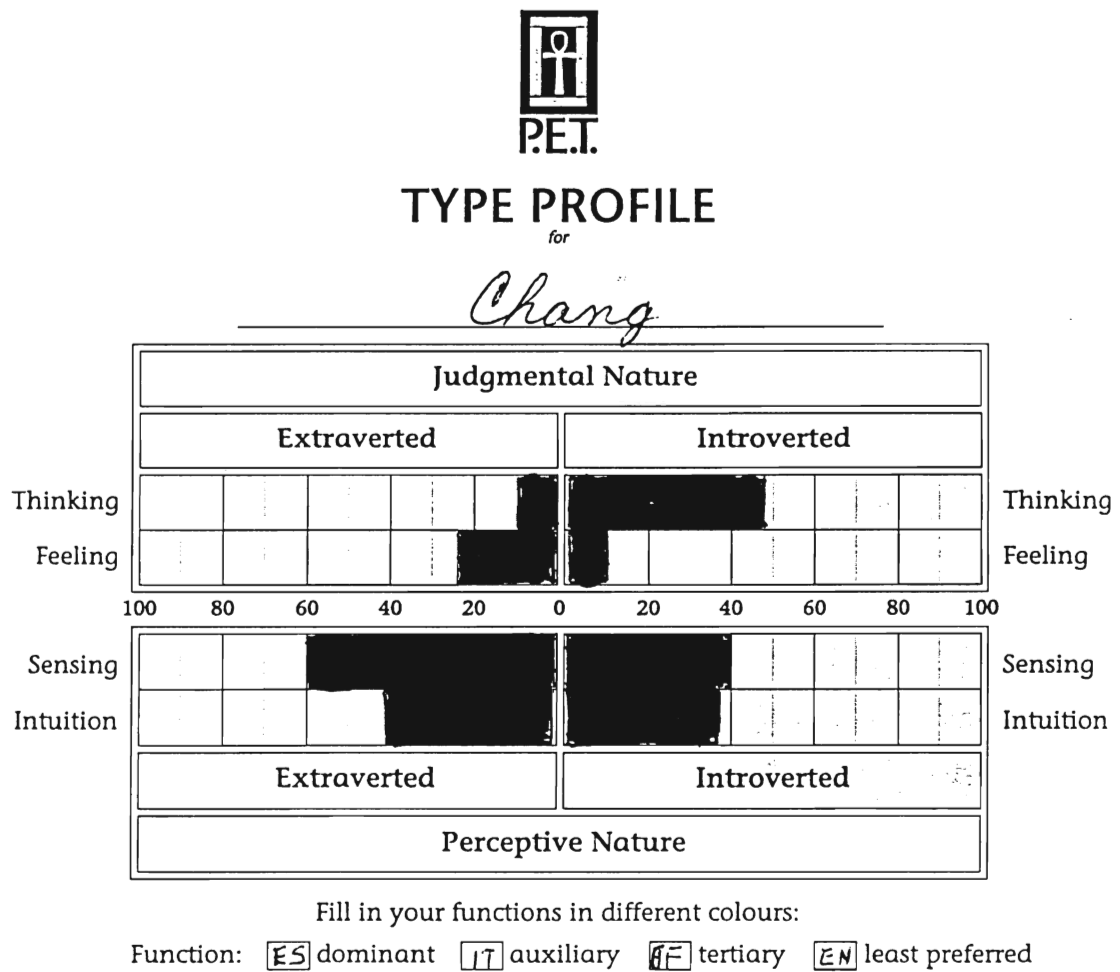


Figure 5. Chang: PET Type Profile

problems such as his class conflict. Both in the interview and the journal, he expressed a preference for working with others in group work, not surprising in an extravert. He valued peer groups because as he says “it helps me to recognize other ways different than mine.” Group activities would have provided him with more activity and helped to hold his attention.

When speaking about the writing process, Chang says that brainstorming is good and he likes it. In his view, “It’s hard for foreign students to think about things fast,” so brainstorming acts as a way of “getting going.” Chang’s brainstorming was very productive and often exhibited intricate relationships with the use of lines and arrows. He said in the interview that he preferred to write a rough draft first and then think about the organization and any changes. It seemed as he talked that it was a way of exploring the ideas first. As was previously mentioned, he valued peer feedback because it helped him to gather other views on the topic.

In terms of the tasks that were done, he thought the definition writing was interesting. This task took a variety of everyday concepts and had the students choose two and write extended definitions. In this instance he had choices and the concepts were concrete. He expressed a dislike for the text because as he said “I like more freedom.” The day we did metaphors he used “brainstorming.” He likened brainstorming to “shaking your brain, exercise, washing, damaging the brain and daydreaming.” The last two ideas have elements of risk and freedom in

them. Perhaps the brainstorming and peer review allowed him to take more chances, to do things in his own way and therefore fit his learning style and personality type better than tasks such as outlining and editing which are more controlled.

Reflections. Chang was always a considerate student. I enjoyed and still do his occasional visits to the office and his friendly chats when we meet on campus. Sometimes I felt that I really did not know what he was thinking, or I was not sure that he found the class useful. This was a concern for me as a Feeling type and an extravert. This is not a judgment about him as a person because he is a very special student and it was a joy to teach him twice in ESL classes. Looking at our personality profiles provided a clue to my feelings that I sometimes did not understand him. We are very different types. His strongest functions are my weakest and vice versa. At one level then, I may find him a mystery because we are very different. It is very difficult to understand people who are our opposites. At the same time, we share the same learning profile. We are both Accommodators, so as teacher and learner we have shared characteristics and common interests.

What did I learn from having Chang in my class? He taught me the importance of allowing students a fair amount of freedom. He had many responsibilities in his credit classes and a 1-hour conflict. Although he could not

always work on the same timetable as his classmates, he always managed to complete the work required and accommodations made were worthwhile.

Secondly, I was reminded that when at times I feel unsure of another, it may just be a difference in personality. It is far better to focus on the positive aspects of the teacher/student relationship. Chang was a student who cared about those who worked with him, was always friendly and considerate, and worked well in groups. He also worked at maintaining relationships and does not forget people after he moves on. These kinds of characteristics add a special dimension to teaching and learning.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the interviews, journals and classroom observations. The main focus was on the student perceptions of the writing process used in developing compositions. Student perceptions of the tasks assigned and the course itself were also presented. These were first reported as they related to the class as a whole and then were augmented with case studies of 5 students. Chapter 5 will discuss these findings and their implications.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study investigated student perceptions of the writing process used in most ESL classrooms. The critical action research paradigm was used. Students were made aware of all aspects of the research, and as a researcher, I welcomed any questions or suggestions from the students. Interviews, observations and journals were used to gather data on students' perceptions, writing, and interactions. The interviews were kept open-ended so as not to begin with any preconceived idea of where they would lead. The review of the related literature examined the place of the process approach in the teaching of writing to ESL learners, personality type and learning styles, and research paradigms relative to the study. The extensive notes and taped interviews were analysed to find information related to student perceptions of the writing process. Personality and learning style were examined to see what relationships, if any, there were between student perceptions and these factors. The data were put in chart form. Case studies were developed for students who demonstrated a variety of types, styles and course grades. These case studies and the class information were presented in Chapter 4.

In this chapter, I examine the implications and significance of the findings of the study. The chapter is organized according to the student perceptions of the writing process as found in the data, the relationship of learning styles and personality type to students' perceptions, and the researcher's perceptions of the

course and the research paradigm. Implications for theory, for practice and further research are discussed.

Student Perceptions of the Writing Process

The main purpose of this research was to examine the students' perceptions of the writing process. The use of brainstorming as a means of preparing to write about a subject was perceived to be a very useful strategy by many of the students. This could be attributed to the fact that students find it genuinely useful. All of those who felt it was the most helpful step related it to language or vocabulary concerns. In other words, they perceived it as an important part of the preparation for writing in their second language, English. There are other possible explanations for their positive perceptions of brainstorming. First, brainstorming is one of my favourite activities, and this could have affected students' perceptions. Second, this part of the lesson is short and quick, and students then move into small groups to expand their brainstorming material in an interactive group process which is also short and lively. The nature of the work itself, then, could be more interesting and this could affect student perceptions, leading them to perceive it in a more positive way than perhaps writing a rough draft for a short composition. Related to this is the fact that this activity is free and spontaneous. This is why I enjoy it, and perhaps they enjoy this opportunity for spontaneity in the midst of their heavy work loads. The strong positive perceptions about this

aspect of the process could be affected by all of these factors and perhaps others.

Of the 12 students that mentioned brainstorming as the most helpful step in the process, four of them remarked that it was valuable because it was an opportunity to gather ideas and vocabulary about the topic, and two of them said that it was important because English was not their first language and it helped them prepare to write in it. Most of the students, when asked if they used this technique when writing in their own language, said that they did not. One went on to say that she did not need to in Japanese because she could just think about the ideas, knew the words needed to express the ideas, and knew that others would understand her. Three commented that it was not necessary when writing in their own language because they had little trouble getting started. The students who perceived brainstorming as important came from a variety of language backgrounds, and varied in their personality types and learning styles so these results are not necessarily related to such factors.

Another interesting point is that neither the first-language background nor the experience of the students with English appeared to be related to their perception that brainstorming and other prewriting activities were useful strategies. Students who had used the process approach before coming to Canada and those who learned to use it here were both in the group that identified it as a helpful activity. Bailey (1993) notes that in a pilot study of prewriting strategies used by 11 ESL students in a prefreshman composition class, student writers effectively

used such techniques even when not required to. Bailey found this to be unrelated to first-language experience or proficiency in their second language. With regard to proficiency in English, in this study, students across this spectrum were also among the 12 who said brainstorming was the most helpful step in the process. Although the numbers in the study do not allow for any generalizations to be made to other populations, it does appear that brainstorming was of significant value to the majority of students in this class. In their perceptions, this was because it enhanced their use of their second language.

Friedlander (1990) found that students made many fewer notes when writing about a topic in the language in which they had learned about the topic; in other words, they used fewer noticeable planning processes if they were writing about something that they had learned in the language being used. This could be the reason students related prewriting and brainstorming to vocabulary and use of their second language. Perhaps many of the topics in the text were ideas they were reading about for the first time.

The one prewriting activity that students did not appear to particularly enjoy or say that they valued was freewriting and looping. This involved writing quickly, in sentence form, ideas about a topic in a continuous manner for about 10 minutes, and then sometimes circling concepts of particular interest and freewriting about them. It is interesting as a teacher to question why this is. Perhaps the students find it less interactive, less productive, or less stimulating in

terms of generating ideas. It is also possible that working in complete sentences may be more demanding for them. They may, in spite of instructions to the contrary, find themselves naturally attending to grammar and sentence formation, thus slowing down the ability to let their ideas flow. For this reason, they may perceive it as a writing task and not a prewriting task, whereas the teacher sees it as a preparation to write.

Making an outline was cited as a valuable step by five of the students. Three of the five were thinking types. One student was an EN; however, she had a very strong auxiliary function in Introverted Thinking. Introverted Thinking was also the auxiliary function of the fifth student, so all the students who identified outlining as valuable were thinking types or had thinking as a strong auxiliary function. However, none of these students, when asked how they wrote in their first language, indicated that they used outlines. All the students who identified outlining as important said that it was helpful because they needed to have their ideas organized before they wrote. This makes intuitive sense. Thinking types like things to be logical and well-ordered. Using an outline would ensure that this was the case. Perhaps in their own language it is easier for them to hold their ideas in logical order just using a thinking process. This could explain why they do not use outlines in their first language writing. Another possibility is that they may not have been taught the use of an outline before their English writing experience. A third possibility is that using an outline may not fit the rhetorical

organization used in writing in their first language. Academic writing in English is very straightforward and lends itself readily to outlining. This may not be true in all languages (Kaplan, 1966). Because of the fact that Thinking was either the dominant or a strong auxiliary function in all the students with a preference for using outlines, the idea that personality may be a strong influence seems most likely. The students with this preference came from Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and Swedish first-language groups. Their learning styles varied as did their experience studying English.

Only two of the students identified rough drafts as important. In fact they both said that that was how they wrote all their essays. They said that they thought about it and then wrote their rough drafts, did a spell check and handed them in. Sometimes they had a native speaker read it to be sure that it was grammatically correct, made the necessary corrections and then handed the essays in. These students said that they used the same method when writing in their first language. In fact most of the other students in the study, when asked how they wrote for their academic courses or in their first language, said that they merely wrote one draft, made corrections, and then handed it in. Many said they had no time for doing more than this. It is possible that most students only use the process steps when working in the parameters of a classroom situation, that is when they are asked to do so. Although the use of computers was not discussed in the interviews, it is also possible that the ease of organizing and editing as you go

along on computers may also be a reason why so many students usually write one draft of an essay. Only two students saw the rough draft as important, yet most identified it as the only step they used when writing on their own in answer to a later question. For the majority, in their academic courses this was not a step in the process but was the entire process.

Peer revision was found by six students to be a very useful step in the process. All but one of these students was an extravert. The introvert later explained that she needed to ensure that her ideas were clear to others. Only three students said that they made changes based on feedback from their peers and that was for the sake of clarity. One student who said that it was not helpful, noted that it only helped if the peer was a better writer and thinker than he was. At the same time, students, when observed, participated well in peer groups. In informal conversations, students often note that the best thing about their ESL class is the opportunity to talk to others who share their experiences. It appears that although only six identified it as useful, most enjoyed working with their peers and found personal value in the exchange even though it was not important, in their view, to their writing. Interactions of this kind develop relationships and make the class seem more interesting, but they perhaps are not valued as a learning tool by the students.

Editing was not mentioned by any of the students when they were asked to discuss what aspects of the writing process they found helpful. One reason could

be that it is not dealing with ideas and they do not see it as writing. Another possibility is that it is tedious and boring for them. It could also be that because they lack confidence in finding and correcting errors, they use native speaking friends for this task and no longer see it as “their problem.” However, it may be that not enough stress was put on this step and its importance, or that my attitude towards editing influenced theirs. Colleagues who find this task interesting and do it well may have engendered more enthusiasm for editing. The percentage of class time spent on the editing process was lower than that for other steps, so the students may have assumed it was less important. Whatever the reason, thought needs to be given to ways of helping students develop an awareness of the importance of editing well. As a teacher I need to consider ways to make editing more valid and interesting for my students.

To conclude, students in this class perceived the prewriting phase as the most valuable step in the writing process, especially brainstorming. They related this to the fact they were writing in their second language and found it helped them prepare to use vocabulary and ideas in a language that was more difficult for them. In reviewing my own practice, I need to consider whether I give enough attention to editing and its importance. Finally, as students in practice outside the classroom do not use the process approach when writing their essays, it may be important to help them hone their skills in using those steps they actually employ.

Student Perceptions of the Tasks

Journal writing was encouraged by the course text as a means of developing fluency. As a researcher, I found it useful to have the students keep journals, but they were told that they were not required. Journals could be used for personal reflection, tasks from the text, responding to aspects of the course and/or maintaining a dialogue with the teacher. They were also told that if they wished, I would correct the grammar and comment on the writing. On four occasions, journals were used to obtain students' perceptions and attitudes to the course and to writing tasks. In these cases, they were class assignments. Five journal tasks from the text were also class assignments. Very few students kept extensive journals. The majority used them only for the in-class or homework tasks assigned, or to freewrite about their essay topics.

Journals were perceived as valuable by only two students, both of whom were introverted. As Alice says, "When I write in my journal I don't worry about grammar or expressions or am I OK - I'm OK." The journal then can be a place where some students feel free and find enjoyment expressing themselves. For them, it can be a very useful tool. This was true for Hsieh-Ti. He had very little self-confidence with English. He often wrote more clearly in his journal than in his rough drafts because he was less conscious of language.

Gifford (1993), in her study of journal writing, found that in students at a lower level, journal writing did not encourage critical reflection and speculated

that language ability, age/maturity and the cultural background of the participants may have been factors. The students in this study were older by a few years, and had higher levels of language competence, but only Alice's journal showed signs of critical reflection. This could be related to experience more than maturity. Alice was younger than Hsieh-Ti, who also enjoyed keeping a journal, but did not engage in critical reflection. Alice's life has been more challenging on a personal level and more demanding of self-reflection. It is possible, then, that life experience may be a more important factor in the ability to engage in critical reflection when writing in a journal. Maturity may be relevant in that with maturity usually come a number of life experiences that provoke critical reflection.

Personality type may be another important factor in the amount of critical reflection students do when writing in journals as well as their perception of the task as an important or useful one. I would speculate that introverted students would find it more useful and satisfying than extraverts. Extraverts may prefer to engage in discussion of ideas with others rather than with paper or computers in silent reflection, whereas introverts may prefer the self reflection about ideas that journal writing allows.

Finally, time to reflect and write in journals, as well as personal priorities may influence whether or not students utilize journals. ESL students need more time to read and absorb material from texts for their courses. They may take more time developing notes and studying for tests and exams. Considering the financial

and personal cost involved in studying abroad, their priority is to complete their academic studies quickly and do as well as possible in them. The number and difficulty of the courses undertaken may also have affected the amount of journal writing that was done.

As a teacher, I found the journals helpful as a way of getting to know my students better, developing an awareness of topics that interested the students, and obtaining feedback about the course. Were I to use them again, I would be very careful. One method would be to keep them very focussed on the course material as this was, for most students, the only valid use of them. Another option would be to use a journal as one of a number of choices that students could use as a tool for evaluation. In the latter case, discussing with the individual initially the form it would take and how it would be used would be important.

Many texts, even those developed for the high levels, include journal writing tasks. Careful consideration should be given in advance as to whether to use journals, how they are introduced, the purpose for which they will be used, whether they should be a required or an optional task, the content of the entries, and the kind of feedback that will be given. Involving the students themselves in discussion of the potential uses for a journal and allowing it to be one of a number of choices of tasks may be the best way to approach journals in a higher level ESL class. If personality is a factor in whether keeping a journal is perceived as useful or enjoyable, students could make this decision themselves.

Of the other tasks, those perceived as most helpful were paragraph writing and summary writing. Students said they saw these skills as useful in their credit course work when asked why. They appreciated practice in writing definitions and essays for the same reasons. Definitions are often required on examinations and in essay writing. One of the most frequent reasons given for a students' positive perception of a task was that it was practical and helpful in their other courses. Leki and Carson (1994), in a survey of 77 students' perceptions of writing courses for academic purposes, found that many of the students mentioned a desire to build greater speed in their writing as it was useful for short-answer questions on exams. Paragraph-level tasks such as writing definitions and summaries appear to have been perceived positively for a similar reason.

Reporting information from a graph was one of the first tasks in the course text (Brown, Cohen & O'Day, 1991). Students found it very challenging. I observed during the class that they seemed to have difficulty in interpreting the information on the graph and most found it discouraging and difficult even though they were working with a partner. Only one student noted that it was an interesting and useful task. That student was an EN with a very strong auxiliary function in ET. In the General Description of Psychological Types (Cranton & Knoop, 1994a) descriptors for EN's are "exploring, self-directed, and creative" (p. 9) for ETs "critical, problem solving, questioning, and systematic" (p. 3). The individual who liked this task worked methodically in class to make sense of the

graphs. He also received the highest grade on the task. It is not uncommon to like that in which we do well. Therefore, it is possible that his success accounted for his perception of the task as useful and interesting. However he seemed to really enjoy the exercise in that lab class according to observation notes. The same source also says that ENs as learners “are interested in going beyond the surface and the facts, in peering around and behind things” (p.9), and that their primary aim in learning is transmitting the picture of relationships between things. A learner with these qualities would have been very much attracted to the task of describing the relationships illustrated in the graphs between growth patterns and development and birth and death rates and development. Student perception of the task then could be related to personality type. Some tasks may appeal more to particular types. Consideration should be given to having a variety of tasks in any given term so that there will be material that is attractive to a number of different learning styles and personality types. Leki and Carson (1994), based on student perceptions of writing courses, conclude that consideration should be given to the variety of writing tasks and topics assigned in order to give students training in analysing and practising a variety of tasks.

Essay writing was reported by only three students to be important. Most of the students were taking courses that did not require them to write essays. This task was also quite demanding of their time. For these reasons, the majority of the class did not report writing the essay as helpful to them. Many found that writing

with a time limitation as they did in the lab classes was useful, as it helped them develop an ability to work more quickly in English. It might be helpful to plan classes so that they had time in the one 2-hour segment to engage in prewriting activities and outlining a short essay. In the lab they could then complete the rough draft, use peer review and revise the essay. In that way, they would have ample practice in organizing and writing material in a limited time. This would prepare them for tests, quizzes and exams in their academic classes and also help them with any essay writing tasks, as most of them seem to work close to their deadlines. Another possibility would be to have one major assignment that was part of their academic course work with permission of their professor. This could then be graded for the use of the steps in the process, organization and language use. Such a task could also be used to teach time management with essay assignments.

Researcher Reflections on the Research

Both as a psychology major and a TESL major, most of my reading and critical analysis of studies involved quantitative design. Prior to beginning this research, I read Kincheloe's (1991) book, Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment. The ideas expressed excited me. They harked back to teachers like Freinet and Freire and gave me a vision for the kind of research I wanted to embrace. This initial excitement continually clashed with my

quantitative background. Time and again I found myself questioning the validity of what I was doing. What contribution would this make to the body of literature? The methodology was strange and cumbersome and time-consuming. Most of the time, students did not want to be empowered but to fulfill requirements.

Living with research is like living with teaching or living with oneself through a process of growth and change, two steps forward and one step back, if one is lucky. Sometimes it is a graceful dance, sometimes a series of awkward movements, stepping on toes and thinking one will never “get it” because, truth to tell, we cannot. The moments of gracefulness, however, are worth all the awkward moments, hard work and sweat. In writing up the case studies, the research began to make sense for me. It was people. No research can ever do justice to any student’s complexity or mine, but qualitative research became comfortable and valuable for me as I did that. This research involved real people—not numbers but individuals, all with different personalities, desires, needs and skills, different ways of learning and being. There were glimpses of understanding and insight into my own way of being as a teacher. I spent quality time reflecting about my students and my practice. My attitude to research has changed. I can use this kind of research in daily teaching to change and improve my teaching practice, and to become more aware of my students’ individual needs.

Implications for Practice

Having had time to reflect on the study, I believe there are a number of implications practitioners who teach English as a second language may wish to incorporate or consider when planning their curricula. These fall under the categories of: using the writing process, incorporating journal writing into a class, planning tasks designed to teach particular skills in writing, and practical matters of administration. Finally, and perhaps most important, is the value of reflection on the part of teachers in the second language classroom. In each of these categories the personality types and learning styles of the teacher and the learners are considerations.

An initial consideration is the use of the writing process. Because some students have not been exposed to the steps in the writing process, it is important that they have an opportunity to practise them. In this way, they may find that some are particularly useful or helpful to them in their academic writing tasks. However, it is obvious that this group of students, though familiar with all the steps, rarely used them outside of the writing class. Assisting students in developing their own process, the process that works best for them, may be more helpful and realistic at this level. When my mother taught me to cook, she taught me to read the recipe, take out all the ingredients, and put them on the counter before I started. Certainly, it was very helpful when cooking was a new and mysterious realm. Now when I cook I take what I need from the cupboard as I

need it and make changes in procedures and ingredients for practical reasons of time, lack of a particular ingredient or the facilities available in the kitchen I am using. As an adult I do it my way. When I write, I do not use the process approach as it is found in texts. I read around the topic, think about it until I have enough background knowledge to form a logical thesis and then with the briefest of outlines (a list of supporting points), begin to write. As time allows, I rewrite to improve the organization and style.

I have always told my students that the process is flexible and can be adapted to their particular styles and needs, but I have never worked with individuals to help them do that. Psychological Type and Learning Style inventories allowed them as learners and myself as a teacher to understand preferences, strengths and weaknesses better. Of course it is important that students be exposed to a wide variety of ways to express their ideas in written form. That having been done, helping students to perfect their own best way of approaching the writing task could be more valuable for them in the long term than practising a process that they are not going to use in the real world. Leki and Carson (1994) underline the importance of making a greater effort to consult more with ESL students and former students about their needs. They suggest that to give students a voice in this way balances the “top-down approach to curriculum design with information from those who are the focus of our efforts” (p. 99). It is not a matter of process or product, but striking a balance or redressing one and

doing it in the best interest of the students.

Secondly, there is the question of using journals in the writing class.

Journal writing is a popular classroom activity found in most texts at most levels of ability. In spite of the fact that some students and teachers find it helpful and rate it positively, I agree with Gifford (1993) that the purpose for its use should be clear to the students and the practitioner, that there should be guidance in its use and a focus, and that there should be discussion with the students about how it will be used. I would go further to suggest that it be a task, among others, that the students can choose freely to use to develop fluency or explore their ideas. This is because the task had little appeal to the majority of the students in the class and appeared to me to be preferred by particular personality types. Journal writing, especially used as an in-class activity is an easy way to fill 15 minutes. Do we choose it for this reason or because, based on research, we know it benefits all our students? A large body of research is needed to establish the validity of this practice and to establish guidelines for practice.

There are also some implications for practice that emerged from the findings about the tasks. Tasks that could be seen to be helpful in their academic courses were valued most highly with the students. In fact, that was the most common reason given for valuing a task. This suggests that care should be given to make explicit any relevance a task has for regular course work.

Another consideration relates to administration. In the administration of the

ESL programs in any jurisdiction, it makes sense to regularly consult those who teach the programs, perhaps setting up some sort of regular questionnaire or interview protocol. Teachers may, from time to time, be aware of information that could be useful to those that administer programs in university settings. Secondly, it would seem to me that gathering focus groups of ESL students to consult both to set up the courses and develop an awareness of client needs and desires would make a lot of sense. The business report indicated that these students have a wealth of information and ideas that could be useful to university administrators. Although students' ideas may vary, as they vary in type and interests, there were many common concerns which if addressed could make for higher levels of student satisfaction.

Finally, there are personal implications for practice. As a teacher I have benefited enormously from the opportunity to do this research. It has been the occasion of a great deal of reflection on my practice. There are many ideas that have emerged from this reflection that I would like to try in future classes. There were many benefits from the increased knowledge of my students afforded through the use of the PET check and the Kolb inventory. The richest experience for me was the use of the case studies. The reflection that developed, as they developed and the questions that that reflection drew forth, led to insights and ideas for future practice.

Cranton (1992) summarizes the various roles that an educator assumes,

when to use them and their dangers. For the roles as reflective practitioner and researcher, she notes that they should be used continually. This study underlined the value of these activities for me and has left me encouraged to utilize them on a more regular basis. She also draws attention to the dangers of reflection. It can be “threatening” and “difficult” (p. 100). This rings true to my experience.

Sometimes “I see the enemy and it is me.” To improve one’s practice sometimes means facing one’s own weaknesses, stretching oneself, and taking risks. One of the implications for my practice is the need to develop and sustain my roles as reflective practitioner and researcher.

Implications for Adult Education Theory

One implication for adult education theory is the importance of individual student differences in learning styles, personality types, and in the needs and goals expressed by the adult learners. The development of a model to illustrate the complexity of interacting factors involved when working with an adult learner could enhance teacher awareness of these factors when planning courses. Figure 6 is an attempt at this. The difficulty of developing such a model is not only the complexity of the factors involved but the interaction of these factors as embodied in the individual student, the teacher, the other students in the class, the social milieu in which the class is operating, in this case a university, and the larger culture in which the educational situation is set. Cranton (1992) proposes a model

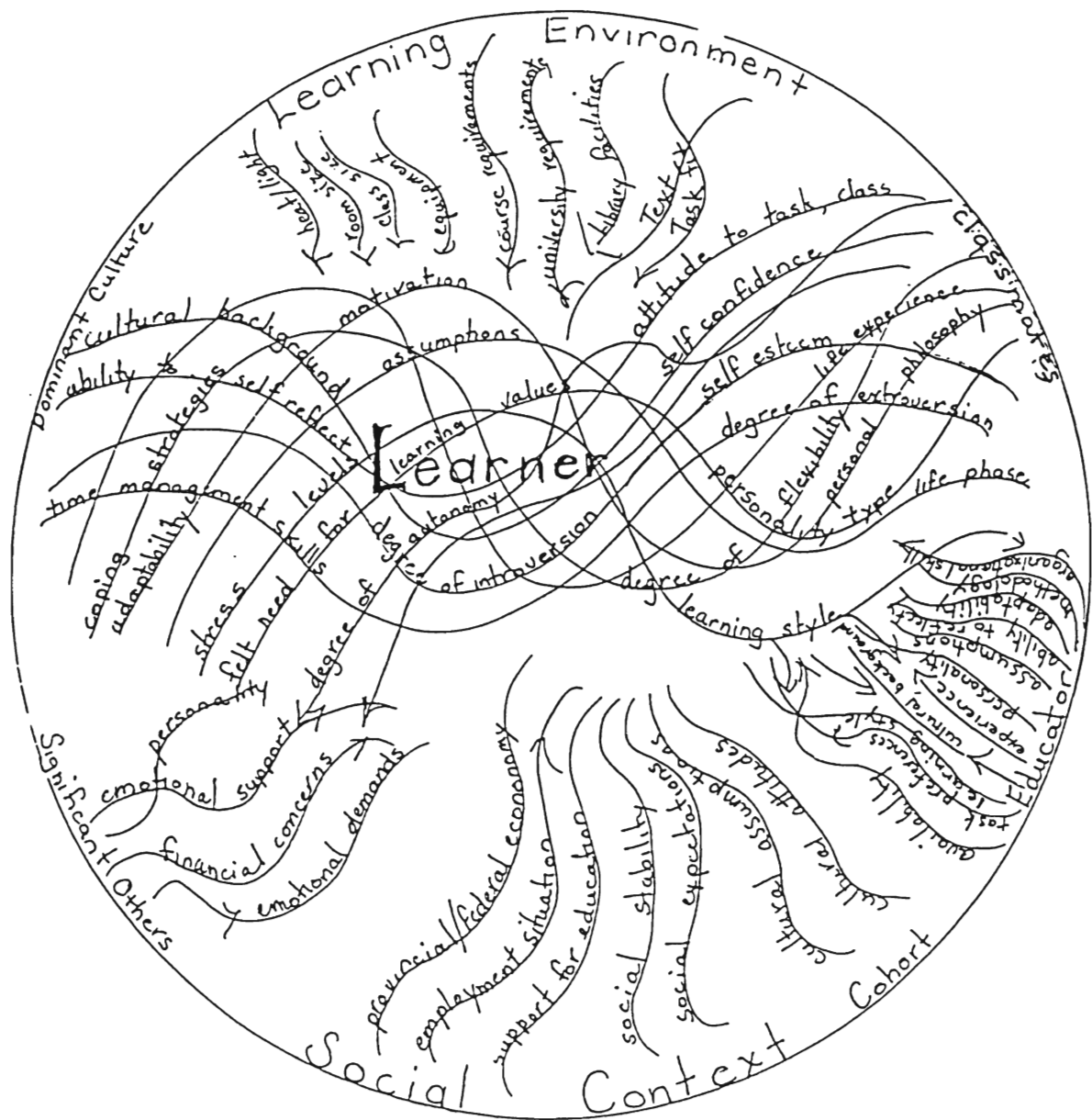


Figure 6. An interactive model for working with adult learners

for working with adult learners that contains most of the necessary components (see Figure 7). However, it is too neat in my view. Somehow the model needs to illustrate the fact that we are dealing with an educational ecosystem. Each component has an infinite impact on the other. Within and between them, there is constant movement as each of these factors touch, attract and repel each other, sometimes coming together or repelling each other in such a way or with such frequency as to cause what Mezirow (1990) calls a 'disorienting dilemma' or a challenge to our assumptions which may lead to reflection and possibly to transformative learning or change. This in turn can lead to further change within the learner or in the teacher, environment, or educational system leading again to change in the learner and so on. Any model for adult education needs to demonstrate the dynamic, and unpredictable nature of the interactions involved.

Developing the case studies from my notes and reflections made this complexity a reality for me. Each of the students was so different, as was the way in which I interacted with them, the way they responded to one another and to me, the tasks and methods they preferred, the amount and type of feedback they wanted. Yet there were common concerns, common problems, common needs that led to the development of close ties between the students. The deeper awareness of my own practice, coupled with reflecting on the students and their perceptions, caused me to question whether I really acted on the assumptions that I stated at the beginning of the study. If asked, I would have said that in the past I learned from

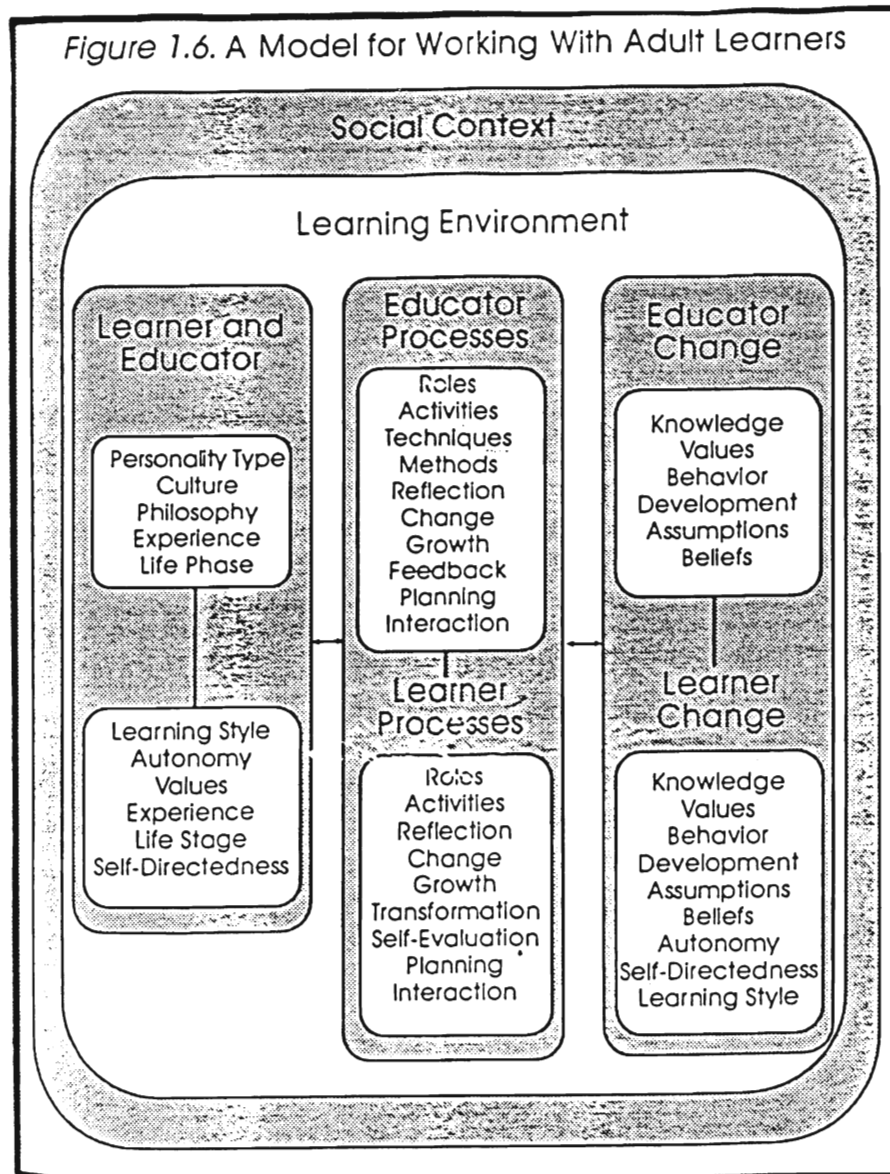


Figure 7. Patricia Cranton's model for working with adult learners

(Cranton, 1992, p. 23)

my students as much as they learned from me. Frequently, I have changed or modified my teaching practice because of things I learned from my students, from their questions and their expressed needs. The difficulty is that some changes require a major reorganization of how we do things and so we avoid the difficulty by making minimal changes, tinkering with what is, instead of embarking on a major overhaul. Developing a writing program that truly involves the students as co-learners who share the responsibility for learning means spending the time to know my students, their interests and needs (Freire, 1972; Kincheloe, 1991). This might mean working to establish a self-access centre, spending more time with individual students so that the program fits their needs more closely, spending more class time helping students to establish personal and class goals for the course and involving them in setting the criteria for evaluation. All these things involve change, new learning, and a greater level of personal commitment, as well as time. One test of whether this research can be truly called action research is in the change and action that result from my own reflections based on this research study.

The law of inertia, the natural resistance of educators and students to change (even of the learning environments and the social environments depicted in Cranton's 1992 model), whether personal or institutional change, is something that perhaps needs to be incorporated into any model of adult education. Freire (1972) saw educators, at least those who maintained the traditional function of

“educator,” as power figures who imposed their values on students. He argued that teachers need to become learners, to become a part of the culture of those they teach and that in this way they can engage in true dialogue with their learners and engage in a mutually responsible process of change and growth. Far from being objective observers, Freire sees educators as needing to become one with those they teach. Kincheloe (1991) in speaking of Freire and Shor, says that they are one of the most important examples of liberating teachers. By researching their students, immersing themselves in their students’ ideas, interests and ways of thinking they encourage them to start to think about their own thinking. This makes sense of the Latin root of the word ‘educate’. We cannot ‘lead’ people ‘out’ unless we go where they are.

Implications for Further Study

Shi and Cumming (1995) suggest that classroom innovations, whether related to pedagogy or curriculum may be best examined using “contextually grounded, qualitative, longitudinal research” (p. 105). It would be useful to trace student use of and perceptions of the process writing approach in this way. This study examined the perceptions of students who had been in Canada for 2 to 4 years using process writing. There could be some benefit to working with students who were beginners and seeing whether their perceptions change over time and in what way or ways. In addition, because of the way in which this research enriched

my teaching experience and, I hope, will have a positive impact on my practice, it could be useful to work with a group of teachers as they engage in a similar type of research and trace the changes, if any, in teaching practice that result from this type of research.

More research is needed on the relationship of student learning styles and personality types and the ways in which they are related to student perceptions of teaching methodology, particularly to each of the steps in the writing process. Research on the relationship of personality type and learning style to student perceptions of and student success in various types of writing tasks would also be helpful. There is very little in the literature in this area and it could prove fruitful. Another question that emerged is whether there are differences in the processes used by novice and expert writers when composing. Are there steps that novices use and experts do not and vice versa? A comparison of how good writers, native speakers and students of English as a second language produce essays, the steps used and not used, and the effects, if any, such differences have on the final products could help teachers know when to encourage development of steps in the process and when to help students to develop those that are most effective for them. Perhaps as students move along the continuum from dependent to self-directed learners there are ways in which the process approach is best used as a teaching method.

One idea occurred to me as I thought about the benefits of teachers'

involvement in research. It resulted from asking myself why teachers do not get involved in research and why there were so few replication studies. There is so little research in writing in English as a second language that uses similar methodologies. There may be many teachers who would be willing to participate in replication studies if there were kits that contained all the necessary information, instructions, tests or questionnaires to be used, consent forms and other related materials. These could be picked up at an initial meeting after a brief explanation of the research. Equipped with this and the phone number or E-mail address of a senior researcher who could field questions as they arose, teachers would be able to collect data, keep journals and field notes and pass them in at the end of a teaching block in a debriefing session with others who had worked on the same project. This type of thing may occur on a smaller scale at universities with ESL programs. However, a broader range of student participants with a wide range of levels of language ability and interests could be added if teachers in non-academic settings could become involved.

Finally, as was mentioned previously, the students' perceptions of journal writing raised many questions for me about the best way to use them in the academic writing class. Is the regularity with which this task appears in recent texts and appears to be used in the classroom justified? Is it based on sufficient knowledge of how journal writing is perceived by ESL students and whether or not it has a positive impact on their writing skills? If it is really only helpful in some

cases, how can we identify those students for whom it is a benefit? These are just a few questions that further research could begin to answer.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to investigate student perceptions of the process approach used in teaching writing in an ESL class. Students appear to have different preferences for different aspects of the writing process. Use of the writing process should be applied with maximum flexibility to accommodate these differences, and teachers should give students choices and encourage decision making. Variety and choice in the writing tasks would also seem to be important. To give writing tasks face validity for students in an academic situation, it is important that students see their applicability to their credit courses. They see as most valuable, tasks that they recognize as contributing to their academic success. This requires attention to students' needs and areas of study, and room for choice and decision making on the part of students. Many recent books on adult education stress the importance of identifying learner needs in this way (Cantor, 1992; Cranton, 1989; Draves, 1984).

In addition, I gained important learning, both personal and professional. As a researcher, I learned a valuable way to incorporate research into my everyday teaching and came to appreciate the intrinsic value of the qualitative research method and critical action research. As a teacher, I gained a deeper awareness of

my students, and insights into my practice. Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 4), in discussing the need for teachers to be better informed about their practice, argue that “when critical reflection is seen as an ongoing process and a routine part of teaching, it enables teachers to feel more confident in trying different options and assessing their effects on teaching.” This research helped me to develop my skills to critically reflect on my practice and see more of the options of which they speak. As a person, I also came to know myself better and recognize the ways in which my personality and learning style impact on my teaching practice and my students. (My PET Type Profile is included in Appendices C.) Some of the students also expressed the fact that they gained a deeper understanding of themselves as individuals and as learners from the use of the PET Type Check and the Learning Styles Inventory, as well as developing their academic writing skills.

Brookfield (1990) discusses what a complex and passionate experience teaching is and says that the “truth is that teaching is frequently a gloriously messy pursuit in which surprise, shock and risk are endemic” and that it is often experienced as “chaotic”(p. 1). Figure 6 illustrates this chaos on a learner’s level. Give the model a three-dimensional spiral effect and set it moving gently in the tidal pool of a classroom. Add any number of similarly complex three-dimensional organisms and you have the situation he describes. You also have the context for this study. It was the world of “circles within circles” described by Ely (Ely with Anzul, Friedman, Garner & Steinmetzl, 1991), who goes on to

say that qualitative research is not “research as set apart”, but a “way of life”, and “in doing qualitative research we enact what we value” (p. 232). That was certainly my experience.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

BROCK UNIVERSITY

Research Project: The process approach in teaching writing: Personality, learning styles and student perceptions

Researcher: Patricia E. Brillinger

The intent of this research is to explore how students with different learning styles and psychological types perceive the steps in the writing process used in the process approach. Participants will take a PET Type test to assess psychological type and a Kolb Learning Styles Inventory to assess learning style. They will also give feedback on class activities and teacher observation through the use of dialogue journals and interviews. In no way will the level of participation affect the student's grade.

Student participation is voluntary. The students are free to withdraw from the study at any time and withdrawal from the study will not result in any penalty, nor will it affect their grades.

The confidentiality of the data and anonymity of the participants will be guaranteed. Any aspect of the study is open to the participants' questions. Participants will be notified when the final copy of the study is available and it will be kept in my office for anyone to review and ask questions.

I have read and understand the above statements, and I agree to participate in this research.

Participant
Name: _____

Researcher
Name: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix B: Note to Participants Research on Process Writing

Pat Brillinger

19/9/94

To help you understand my research, here is a brief explanation. If you have any questions after reading this, please ask. Your questions will be appreciated and so will any comments, ideas and suggestions that you may have. It is my hope that you will participate in this way.

The study will examine how you think and feel about the different steps in the writing process. Students will do a personality type inventory and a learning styles inventory in order to better understand their own ways of working on the tasks, what they like and don't like and why. I will keep notes and observations about what I see in class. Students participating will be encouraged to use their journals to discuss the things we do in class and how they feel and what they think about it, and whether or not it helped them with their writing.

I hope that understanding students' thoughts and feelings may lead to finding ways to improve teaching practice.

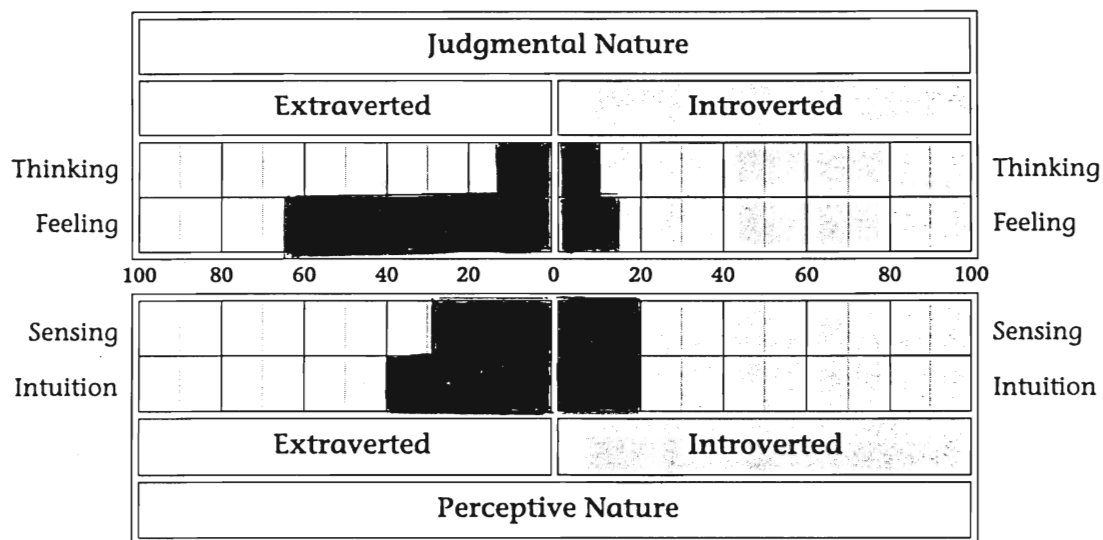
Participation in the study is voluntary. You will not be identified in any way when the research is written.

Appendix C: Patricia's PET Type Indicator



TYPE PROFILE

for

Patricia


Fill in your functions in different colours:

Function: ☒ **EF** dominant ☒ **EN** auxiliary ☒ **ES** tertiary ☒ **IT** least preferred